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C A M I L L E  
DESMOULINS  
A B I O G R A P H Y  
BY VIOLET METHLEY

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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PART ONE: THE NORTH WIND	17
PART TWO: THE WEST WIND	91
PART THREE: THE EAST WIND	155
PART FOUR: THE SOUTH WIND	223
BIBLIOGRAPHY	319
INDEX	321





PART ONE  
THE NORTH WIND

“Blown crystal-clear by Freedom’s Northern Wind.”

*J. G. Whittier. “Mountain Pictures.”*



## I

**O**N an early spring day in the year 1760 a son was born to Maître Jean-Benoît-Nicholas Desmoulins, civil and criminal lieutenant-general of the Bailiwick of Guise, and to Dame Marie-Magdeleine Godart, his wife.

No doubt there was great rejoicing in M. Desmoulins' small whitewashed house in the Rue Grand Pont. It is only once in a lifetime that a father can celebrate the birth of his eldest son.

The following day, March 3rd, the little boy was baptised in the Church of St. Pierre and St. Paul, and received the names of Lucie-Simplice-Camille-Benoist. Years later, in writing to his father, he was to say with Republican enthusiasm: "Did you guess that I should be a Roman, when you christened me Lucius, Sulpicius, Camillus?"

The little white house with the slated roof stands, or, at least, stood quite recently, in the street "in front of the Place d'Armes." The low-ceiled panelled rooms remained a few years ago much as they were when Camille played in them as a child.

Nevertheless, the memories of that "gamin of genius" which linger in the town of his birth, after the lapse of a century and a half, are very vague and scanty. In 1871, when the historian, Jules Claretie, visited Guise, he could find few people who had any remembrance of the family of Desmoulins. Their house was easily identified, some of the older residents recalled dim traditions of Camille's tempestuous

boyhood, a fly-blown portrait was discovered amongst heterogeneous rubbish in the attics of the town-hall—and that was all.

In his native town, a statue of Camille Desmoulins has since then been erected. Such a reminder is not needed by France, and by the world. There was that touch of genius in the man which makes him as much a bodily presence now in his writings as he was in the Paris of 1789. Whilst we read, we seem to feel him very near; his reckless laugh, his hurried, hesitant speech are almost audible. . . . He lives still for us, one of the most intimate and virile figures of the great Revolutionary period, yet another of the "boys who will not grow up" of the world's history.

Camille's father, as we have said, was lieutenant-general of the Bailiwick of Guise, a sufficiently dignified and honourable post. For the rest, he was a country lawyer and something of a scholar besides, who toiled in his leisure moments at the compilation of a learned and weighty "Encyclopædia of Law" which was destined never to arrive at publication.

We have a very good portrait of M. Desmoulins the elder. It may be found in those letters which passed between him and his son during the years which Camille spent in Paris. It is impossible not to admire and reverence the man who is revealed to us. He is wise and just, essentially well-balanced and even-tempered—he has every quality, in short, which Camille lacked.

The father and son represent two distinct types of the Picard character. In M. Desmoulins the elder was exemplified that sound common sense and shrewd reason which should pertain to the province of Calvin, St. Simon and Condorcet.

As to the younger man, he belonged to the breed which an old author, C. M. Saugrain, described in his "Nouveau Voyage de France."

Writing as he did in the year 1720, and speaking of

the Picards in general, M. Saugrain's words might well apply to Camille in particular.

"We believe that the name of Picardy," he says, "is derived from the fact that the Picards are easily piqued or offended. . . . It is commonly reported that the Picards are hot-headed, and as they are angered with very little reason, one willingly leaves their province for fear of being involved in quarrels; for the rest, they are very sincere."

Camille often found his father lacking in ambition, and over-fond of deliberation; there was even one period when he thought him callous and hard. But these were only temporary misunderstandings. A fundamental love subsisted between the father and son which nothing really affected, a love which only grew stronger until death separated them.

We know very little of Dame Marie-Magdeleine Godart, the mother of Camille. That little is well summed up in the few sentences written by M. Desmoulins to his son on the day of her death, and received by that son when he was himself in the very shadow of the scaffold.

"I have lost the half of myself. Your mother is no more. . . . She is worthy of all our regrets; she loved you tenderly."

It is an epitaph of which no woman would have cause to be ashamed.

M. Desmoulins had four other children besides Camille, two sons and two daughters.

It is evident that Camille himself, in later years, knew curiously little about these younger brothers of his, Du Bucquoy and Sémery.

All, practically, that we can learn of them is contained in a letter from M. Desmoulins to his eldest son in 1792. This letter was published by the "Journal de Vervins" in 1884, and it was plainly written in answer to one of Camille's.

"You ask me, my son," says M. Desmoulins, "for the name of your brother, Du Bucquoy, as well as for that of Sémery. The



former is called Armand Jean Louis Domitille, who was born on May 5th, 1765. For the past seven years he has served in the late Royal Roussillon cavalry regiment, or the 11th Regiment of the Army of the Midi, and which I believe is either in the interior at Saumur or at Saint-Jean-d'Angély, for I have had no news of him for the last twelve months.

"The latter is named Lazare Nicolas Norbert Félicité, born on June 6th, 1769, and for the past two years in the 10th Battalion of Chasseurs, late Gevaudan, with the Army of the North, in which he shows much zeal. He tells me in his last letter that he is a forlorn sentinel in a wood, and congratulates you on the birth of a son.

"'As for me,' he says, 'I also am married. My wife is a musket, and I take greater care of her than of myself.'"

A short time after this letter was written, in 1793, Desmoulins Du Bucquoy was killed in the Vendéan war.

The younger brother, the "forlorn sentinel in a wood," was captured at the siege of Maestricht, and from that time his family seem to have lost sight of him and to have believed him to be dead. He was, however, known to be living in 1807.

It is a plain record, this, of the lives of two honest soldiers of the Republic. Camille, in the heat of his own battle at Paris, fighting with his own weapon, was to envy what he thought to be the cleaner warfare of his brothers, and to wish that he could exchange his pen for a sword.

The two sisters were named Marie Emilie Toussaint and Anne Clotilde Pélagie Marie. The elder, born in 1763, was married twice, first to a M. Morcy and secondly to a M. Lagrange. She was still alive in 1837. The younger, who was born in 1767, became the wife of a M. Lemoine. Beyond these bare facts we know little or nothing of their after lives.

Camille was first sent, whilst quite a little boy, to a religious boarding-school at Cateau-Cambresis. Amongst his schoolfellows there was his first cousin, Marie Joseph Benoît Godart, son of Godart Brisieux, Madame Desmoulin's brother.

It would seem that from his very earliest youth Camille showed unusual precocity and intelligence. His father, although so diffident on his own account, was not by any means lacking in ambition for his son, as he watched the development of the boy's talents. He planned that Camille should become a great lawyer, an advocate to the Parliament of Paris, but unfortunately the money necessary for a thorough education was not forthcoming.

The Desmoulins were a good bourgeois family, not in any way aristocratic, but what might be called "well-connected." M. Desmoulins, moreover, was a comparatively poor man. His wife only brought him a small dowry, and he had to provide for a growing family.

It seemed that Camille's brilliant career would end very prematurely, that the boy must resign himself to become, like his father before him, a quiet, provincial man of the law. But the life of a country lawyer was not for Camille Desmoulins.

A certain aristocratic connection of the family, one M. de Viefville des Essarts, came to the rescue and obtained for the little boy a scholarship at the Collège Louis-le-Grand in Paris.

This was exactly the opportunity for which M. Desmoulins had longed, and one day in the month of October Camille left his peaceful home in Guise, and set out in the Noyon stage-coach for his new life in Paris.

One can imagine the excitement of the quick-witted, impressionable child at this entry into the strange world of France's capital city, a world where men thought and acted in such a different fashion from the citizens of Guise. Probably, however, Camille soon adapted himself to his changed surroundings; his was not a shy or retiring temperament, and he always made friends easily and whole-heartedly.

A modern writer, M. Georges Cain, himself a pupil

at Louis-le-Grand, describes his old school in no very enthusiastic terms. He speaks of it as black and gloomy enough, with its heavy-leaved gate of dread memories leading into the Rue St. Jacques. He tells of its moss-grown playgrounds, its smoky class-rooms, its punishment chambers high up under the roof, where unfortunate culprits were stifled in summer and frozen in winter.

The college was structurally very much the same in Camille's day, although the lapse of a century may have served to increase its discomforts. In any case, it would appear that this boy's school life was a very happy one. In after years he always looked back to that time with tenderness and regret.

The College of Louis-le-Grand was at this period very fortunate in its head-master. Many of his pupils bear witness to the scholarship of the Abbé Bérardier, and the love which they retained for him all through their after lives proves in itself that he was worthy to win it.

We know well what were Camille's feelings towards his teacher. Years afterwards, when the pupil was at the height of his fame, when he had won the love of Lucile Duplessis, when, as he said himself, he had nothing left to desire, he would have no other priest save his old schoolmaster to marry him and to preach the wedding sermon.

Many of Camille's contemporaries at College were destined like him to play prominent, although widely differing parts, in the days which followed. There were at least three who became prominent journalists; J. S. Peltier of Nantes, Stanislas Fréron, afterwards Camille's friend and collaborator, and Louis François Suleau, the brilliant and unfortunate Royalist writer, whom Camille christened the "Don Quixote of the aristocracy," and who was to die so miserably at the hands of a woman.

There was another of Camille's school companions



who bore a far more famous name than these ; he was Maximilian Robespierre.

Somehow, it is difficult to imagine that Robespierre and Camille can ever have been friends—friends, that is, in the true sense of the word. Yet it is undoubted that they had a real affection for each other, then and later, and Charlotte Robespierre could write in her memoirs :—

“ I know that my brother loved Camille Desmoulins dearly, they having studied together. . . . My brother’s friendship to him was very strong : he has often told me that Camille was perhaps the one of all the prominent revolutionists whom he loved the best, after our younger brother and Saint-Just.”

The two men—and therefore the two boys—were so utterly unlike in character that it must indeed have been a case of the attraction of opposites. Possibly what they found to admire in each other was the possession of those particular qualities which they themselves lacked.

Robespierre, at least in after years, may have admired and envied Camille’s power of expressing himself in his writings, and thereby moving the very souls of men ; perhaps he may have envied yet more his power of inspiring love.

And Camille ? It is possible that he, who described himself, by one of his touches of genius, as the weather-cock, showing the influence of each changing wind, it is possible that he may have envied Robespierre’s self-sufficient, unbending nature, “ which stood four-square to every wind that blew.”

Be it as it may, the two always spoke of each other with affection, even up to the end—that tragic end, when Maximilian, “ my old comrade,” proved so plainly what was the worth of his friendship.

Like many, one might almost say, like most young writers, Camille’s first literary attempts took the form of verse-making. Indeed, he always believed that he

was by nature a poet ; as he said at the end of his life, writing from prison to his wife : “ I was born to make verses.” Nevertheless, his own opinion notwithstanding, one is bound to confess that there is little or no trace of genius in such of Camille’s poetry as has survived to this day. One of his earliest attempts at versifying belongs to this period. It is a poem, written on the occasion of his leaving college, and while the verses are irreproachable in their sentiments, they are wholly undistinguished from a literary point of view.

It was certainly fortunate for the world that Camille gave up his ambition to become a poet, when he discovered within himself that power which made him finally one of the most brilliant journalists of all time.

During the years which he spent at Louis-le-Grand Camille received a very sound classical education. His knowledge of the great Latin authors was both wide and comprehensive, and it had an immense effect upon the literary style of his later years.

It was the fashion in those days for writers to overburden their pages with quotations and references from the classics. Ancient Rome and its manners of speech and thought were very much in the mode, even before the Revolution.

There was little or nothing pedantic, however, in Camille’s use of classical tags and phrases. The atmosphere of Rome had become, as it were, his native air. As a consequence, his quotations have a spontaneity and an aptness which is found in the writings of no one of his contemporaries.

Camille, as we shall see later, could take the dry bones of a Latin historian, and make of them a sentient thing, his own, yet not his own. Perhaps his greatest literary work is that third number of the “ *Vieux Cordelier*,” which directly brought about his downfall. Yet it is little more than a paraphrase from Tacitus, transcribed with that touch of genius which struck

at the very heart of the "System of Terror" of which the Roman "Law of Suspect" was but a prototype.

It was at College that Camille gained that scholarship which later became such a powerful weapon in his skilful hands: but it was not only the literary craftsmanship of the great writers of Rome and Athens which stirred him to admiration; he was moved to a deep and lasting enthusiasm for the spirit of the laws of the early Republics. It was not for nothing that this boy wore out six copies of Vertot's "Révolutions Romaines" and carried with him everywhere a volume of the "Philippics" of Cicero.

We can best judge of the effects of this education from Camille's own words in 1793. In his "L'Histoire Secrète de la Révolution" he makes the well-known statement: "There were perhaps ten of us Republicans in Paris on July 12th, 1789," and in a footnote he adds, in fuller explanation of this assertion: "These republicans were, for the most part, young men who, nourished on the study of Cicero at College, were thereby impassioned in the cause of liberty. We were educated in the ideas of Rome and Athens and in the pride of republicanism, only to live abjectly under a monarchy in the reign, so to speak, of a Claudian or a Vitellius. Unwise and fatuous government, to suppose that we, filled with enthusiasm for the elders of the Capitol, could regard without horror the vampires of Versailles, or admire the past without condemning the present; *ulteriora mirari, praesentia secutura.*"

In this passage Camille uses the word "republican" in its literal sense, the sense in which we now understand it, namely, as one who wishes for a republican form of government.

Nevertheless it is impossible to realise the point of view of the men of that day unless we are aware that the term was habitually used during the eighteenth century in what can only be described as a theoretical and abstract way.



M. Aulard, in his masterly "Political History of the French Revolution," presents this aspect clearly and succinctly, after the most patient and exhaustive study of the political writings of the period. He entirely discredits the existence of a Republican party in France before 1789, but he believes that the illusion has arisen through the frequent employment of the word "Republican" to denote those who were not in the least desirous of establishing a republic in France, but who hated despotism and desired some system of general social reform. In fact, as he says, there had arisen amongst the French "a republican state of mind, which was expressed by republican words and attitudes."

"A republican state of mind"—nothing could express more exactly the spirit of the time. It was a habit of thought which spread through all classes of society, from the Court downwards.

Versailles set the example, when it played with the fire which was afterwards to destroy it. Franklin and Washington could not be made the fashion without that for which they stood becoming fashionable also. La Fayette, as the hero of the populace, represented the cause for which he fought in America.

It is a generally accepted fact that the germ of the French Revolution was carried across the Atlantic by that band of ardent young men who returned to find themselves the idols of the French people, after lending their swords and their fortunes to the support of a rebellion against kingly authority.

Yet there was also inspiration to be drawn from a source nearer at hand in point of geography, if further removed by time. Although Camille and those who, like him, were of a classical turn of mind, might seek for examples amongst the heroes of antiquity, the leaders of the modern English Revolution were well-known and well-admired by the liberal Frenchmen of the reign of Louis XVI. Pym and Hampden were

names to conjure with amongst the leaders of the new thought in France, and the works of Algernon Sidney were even more widely read on the Continent than in his own native country.

It was then in this atmosphere of theoretical republicanism that Camille Desmoulins grew from a boy to a man. The weathercock now for the first time vibrated to the touch of that keen northern wind, blowing from across the Atlantic, and telling of the young nation that had so lately broken the chains of royalty.

The wind was only a light breeze as yet, but it whispered of freedom and the downfall of tyranny, it recalled to Camille the memory of the spacious days of antiquity, it was the precursor of the storm, heralding that great hurricane which was so soon to sweep over France, overturning all things, both old and new, which opposed its course.

## II

**I**T was at the beginning of the year 1784 that Camille finally left the Collège Louis-le-Grand and returned to Guise for a time, to study there for the Paris Bar. He was now twenty-four years old, at about the age, in fact, when modern Englishmen leave the University.

Like his comrade Robespierre, Camille probably received a handsome gratuity when he left the College. This the administrators were in the habit of bestowing upon impecunious students who had particularly distinguished themselves.

His teachers prophesied a brilliant career for the young man, and doubtless he thoroughly agreed with them. Self-depreciation was never one of Camille's faults, and unquestionably at this time he had an extremely good opinion of his own talents and capabilities.

He returned then to Guise, to his father's house, under the impression that he was certainly a person to be reckoned with, and expecting to be received with a certain amount of awe and consideration. It was not long before he made a discovery which has fallen to the lot of many another before and since, that discovery to which he afterwards bitterly referred in a letter to his father, when he said: "I know that nobody is a prophet in his own country."

The humdrum, conservative Guisards were by no means prepared to take Camille at his own somewhat high valuation. More than that, he both shocked and displeased them, and probably fully intended to do so.



We may feel quite sure that he did not keep his disquieting opinions to himself ; it was not in his nature to do this, then or afterwards.

The town of Guise in 1784 was old-world and old-fashioned in the extreme. Even as late as the year 1871, it struck M. Claretie as a "city of the past, of strange, calm, sleepy aspect." Narrow streets of sedate houses, the dwellings of prosperous, hard-working citizens were dominated by the great, fortified citadel, which towered, an emblem of decaying feudal power, on a steep ascent above the town.

Certainly Guise was not the place to encourage new ideas ; the old ones were quite good enough for these staid, well-to-do people, occupied with their own private business and pleasure.

Later it was to be otherwise. The changes in which Camille was to be so actively concerned made themselves felt even in the quiet backwater of his native town. There came a day when Guise, in that Revolutionary craze for giving new names to old things, was to re-christen itself Réunion-sur-Oise. One cannot imagine that the ultra-modern fashion became the old town well.

But all this was in the hidden future. In the meantime, rumours and hints have come down to us which prove that Camille was considered to be a very firebrand by the honest townsfolk of Guise. They thought him a dangerous revolutionary, one whom quiet folk might well be very shy of asking to their homes, who could not be trusted not to lead their sons astray, or make love to their daughters.

It is very likely that their fears were well-founded ; in both these respects Camille had undoubtedly great capabilities, from their point of view. It was rather as though an undergraduate were to return to his home in a sleepy English country town loudly voicing his opinions as a red-hot Socialist and flaunting scarlet

neckties and Fabian pamphlets in the faces of his quiet law-abiding friends and relations.

Even while quite a small boy, during his first holidays from College, Camille had succeeded in scandalising the good townsfolk of Guise. It is said that one day he was arguing so loudly with his brothers and sisters, and declaiming so vehemently against tyranny, that the Prince de Condé, who was the owner of much property in the neighbourhood and who had come to see M. Desmoulins on business, took the small orator by the ear and pushed him out into the street.

A story is told of Camille's behaviour in later years at a respectable provincial dinner-party which gives a fair idea of the young man's attitude towards his neighbours at this time.

M. Jules Claretie, Camille's painstaking biographer, believes this anecdote to be much exaggerated in the version given by M. Edouard Fleury, but it probably rests on more than a slight foundation of truth, and it is, moreover, quite consistent with Camille's character as we know him.

He was staying at the house of his relation, Madame Godart, who lived at the village of Wiège, near Guise. A few local celebrities had been invited to meet the young man, whose talents were apparently admired, although distrusted.

After dinner, one of those present proceeded to make fun of Camille's well-known and loudly-expressed opinions; it seems that the young people of Guise looked upon it as a fine joke to endeavour to provoke the hot-headed collegian into one of his fits of anger.

This time the plan succeeded only too well. To the day of his death, Camille could not bear to be laughed at, and he was provoked past bearing by his companions' gibes at his Republican views.

It is said that at last he lost his temper completely, flung his napkin at the head of his opponent, and sprang upon the table, amidst the ruins of the glass and china.

He proceeded to harangue the guests from this improvised tribune, arousing the laughter of some, and the undisguised anger of others.

Stammering, with his words falling over each other in his wild excitement, Camille poured forth his ideas, talking of an ideal Republic, of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, all of which things sounded to his amazed hearers like so many empty phrases, a mere wind of words.

Yet, after all, it was only a kind of burlesque rehearsal of that great scene five years later, in the gardens of the Palais Royal.

One can well imagine, however, the scandal which such proceedings as these must have caused in quiet, law-abiding Guise. One can picture the townsfolk shaking their worthy heads over the doings of this scapegrace of a Camille, repeating the story of his latest prank, exaggerated no doubt, but none the less thrilling for that, prophesying disgrace to the good name of Desmoulins.

It is to this period of his life that Camille's first love affair—of a kind—would seem to belong. He had a certain affection for a little cousin of his, Flore Godart, but she was only a child, some nine years younger than himself. Camille accordingly calmly announced his intention of waiting until the girl was old enough to marry.

But the Godart family opposed the whole idea of this match very strongly on the grounds of "Camille's political opinions and the dangers to the durability and happiness of this union which were to be anticipated."

Rose Flore Amélie Godart was not to be the wife of Camille Desmoulins. Only a short time afterwards he met the one woman who was really to win his heart, and from that day it is to be feared that poor Flore had no real existence as far as Camille was concerned. In 1792 she was married to M. Tarrieux de Taillan.



Nevertheless, years later, we catch a faint echo of the old dead-and-gone love affair. Lucile, Camille's wife, has heard some rumour of the business, and she is delightfully and quite unreasonably jealous. Here is what Camille himself writes to his father on July 9th, 1793 :—

“ You complain that I do not write to you. . . . Lucile is so frightened that I shall be seized with a desire to embrace you that she would be alarmed if she saw me writing ; so I am taking advantage of the office provided by the Committee of War, of which I have been made Secretary, to write to you freely without her seeing over my shoulder that I am writing to Guise. I imagine that the cause of her anxiety is the recollection of *some cousin* who has been mentioned to her.”

In the meanwhile, the time which Camille spent at his birthplace was not wasted. He was industriously studying law, and he took his bachelor's degree in the September of 1784. There is no doubt that these legal studies were an advantage to him in his future career. They gave him that reasoning faculty, that power of setting forth a case which he undoubtedly possessed, and without which his brilliancy and wit would have lacked that ballast which made his arguments carry conviction to his readers.

Camille seems to have passed his examinations creditably ; he became a licentiate in the spring of 1785, and was sworn later in the same year as an advocate to the Parliament of Paris.

Having attained to this position, he was now, of course, obliged to take up his residence permanently in the capital, and we have no reason to suppose that he felt any particular regret at leaving Guise.

He had been keenly disappointed by his reception in his birthplace. Even after he became a successful man, Camille never quite lost a certain feeling of soreness where the Guisards were concerned.

We read this plainly in his letters to his father. Although he protests that he takes no further interest

in Guise, that he wishes to cut himself off from the provincial narrowness of his native town, one can see plainly beneath the surface of his words that he is eager to prove to his unappreciative fellow-townsmen that their estimate of him was not the true one. One of the sharpest spurs to his ambition was the desire to make a great name in order that Guise might be humbled and be forced to allow that Camille Desmoulins was a son of whom she might well be proud.

With this in his mind it must have been very galling to Camille when the discovery was borne home to him that he was unfitted by nature for the career to which he had been destined from his childhood.

Although he was now what we should call a barrister at the Paris Bar, his briefs were few and unprofitable. Camille was from the first doomed to failure as a pleader. He had no oratorical gifts, and although occasionally he could overcome his hesitation and express himself clearly and well, it was only when he was carried quite outside himself, under very exceptional circumstances, that he could forget his nervousness.

It is curious that one who as a writer was extraordinarily fluent, expressing himself readily and without hesitation, should have been practically incapable of an extemporary speech. In later years he wrote down beforehand all the addresses which he made in the Convention or at the Jacobin Club, and these orations of his were, moreover, composed in an entirely different style from that which he used in his journalistic or literary work. They are stilted, academic, wholly without spontaneity.

Camille's voice, when he attempted to speak in public, was harsh and unmusical; a certain physical weakness in the chest and throat would be sufficient to account for this, and he later often referred to this delicacy as an excuse for not speaking more often

in the Convention. Besides, he stammered slightly, although this did not proceed from any malformation or actual impediment of speech.

It was rather that kind of hesitation which is so often to be observed in nervous or excitable people ; it would really seem to arise from the fact that their thoughts spring up too rapidly to be put into coherent speech.

Camille's stammer took the form, as many contemporary writers tell us, of a deprecatory "hon-hon!" before beginning to speak, a trick which afterwards earned for him his wife's affectionate nickname of "Monsieur Hon."

Camille soon found that he could not hope to make a living at the Bar, although we learn that MM. Perdry, de Denisard, Perrin and Forget gave him a few cases. He was forced to earn a little money by executing law-copying for those others of his profession who were more fortunate than himself, and by drawing up petitions for the procurators at threepence-halfpenny each. One can guess how galling this drudgery must have been to a man of his temperament.

Very few and scanty are the facts which can be discovered respecting Camille's life in Paris, during the period between 1784 and 1789. Nobody thought of recording his doings at that time ; he was of little or no interest to anyone except himself.

Moreover, when he had become a famous man, he preferred to be entirely silent on the subject of these years. They were no source of pride to him, and he even tried to cover and hide them by stating, quite falsely, in 1790, that he had been residing in the Rue de Théâtre Français for the "last six years."

As a matter of fact, we do not really know with any exactness where he lived during those early days in Paris. It is true that he says himself, in a letter to his father, that his lodgings were in the Hôtel de



Pologne, but, as M. Lenotre tells us, at that time there were no less than *three* Hôtels de Pologne in Paris. However, from other indications it would seem that Camille lived in that one which was situated in the Rue Saint-André-des-Arcs.

It is possible to deduct from his letters, and still more from their discontinuance at certain periods, that Camille did not remain in the capital during the whole of the time between 1784 and 1789. Probably, when life became unbearably hard and money impossibly scanty, he returned to Guise for a time, doubtless to be comforted by his mother and reproved by his father, both alike for his good.

It seems plain that it was not until after the opening of the States-General that Camille absolutely and decidedly settled in Paris, with the avowed intention, as he says, of "abandoning Guise definitely."

Egotistical as Camille was, and by no means inclined to self-depreciation by nature, he must have sometimes lost faith in that self of his during those weary years. He must have suffered under a sense of failure, as he wandered through the streets, watching the men around him, independent or with others dependent upon them, whilst he could scarcely keep his own body and soul together.

Sometimes he would forget his miserable life for a time whilst he sat drinking and arguing on the affairs of France and the universe in the famous Café Procopé (now the Café Voltaire), where his portrait is still preserved.

Sometimes he would spend happy, innocent days with the Duplessis family, to whom he had been introduced as a boy by his college friend Stanislas Fréron. M. Duplessis was kind and good-natured, Madame, his wife, was still young and pretty, and they had two charming little daughters, mere children as yet, named Annette and Lucile. Occasionally Camille would spend Sunday with them at their

pretty country house of Bourg-la-Reine, where they would picnic in the fields amongst the long grass and play childish games to amuse the little girls. Late in the sweet summer evenings they would return to Paris in a rough country cart, pleasantly sleepy after their day in the open air.

Such occasions as these were good for Camille. We can be sure that he enjoyed them, in spite of his disappointed hopes and his embittered poverty-stricken life. Until the day of his death Camille remained a very boy, mercifully interested and pleased by small and homely things.

And it was gradually, during these days and afterwards during mornings spent with Madame Duplessis and her daughters in the gardens of the Luxembourg, that Camille's feelings towards little Lucile almost imperceptibly changed. At first it had only been an elder-brotherly liking for a child ten years his junior. There is a great gulf between a young man of twenty-two and a child of twelve.

But the child was growing into a charming girl, and Camille's love increased and altered with her growth, hopeless and more than hopeless as his affection appeared at this time.

Doubtless he had other friends, although we do not know who they were. Maximilian Robespierre was at Arras, building up a career for himself in his native town, where he did not, like Camille, suffer from the consciousness of being misunderstood by his fellow-townsmen. The people of Arras were proud of Robespierre; later they were to give him his great opportunity by sending him to Paris as their deputy to the States-General.

There was another man, like himself an advocate in Paris, whom Camille certainly knew, although at this time it does not appear that they were in any way intimate friends. This was Georges-Jacques Danton, whose life was in later years to be so closely bound

up with that of his younger colleague. Danton was already a prosperous lawyer, in a very different position from Camille. It is not until many years later that the young man mentions him in a letter to his father, dated April, 1792, as "a college comrade, who is in the opposite party to myself and who esteems me sufficiently not to extend to my person the hatred which he holds for my opinions."

If one were to judge Camille only by the writings of his enemies, it would be necessary to believe that in his private life he was a monster of depravity; this, however, may be emphatically denied.

On the other hand, some of his friends, flying to the other extreme, would have us to understand that he was a paragon of virtue; this assertion also cannot be accepted as a fact.

The real truth would seem to be that Camille was morally neither much better nor much worse than most of the young men of his age and class—until he became engaged to Lucile Duplessis.

After his marriage it is impossible to prove, it is equally impossible to believe, that he was ever, in word or act, unfaithful to his wife. To quote from one of his own writings: "My marriage is so blissful, my domestic happiness is so great that I feared I was receiving my reward on earth and I lost my faith in immortality."

A man who could write these words as Camille did, honestly and without affectation, can have had no temptation to seek for happiness elsewhere.

Before his marriage, before he had won for his own the girl whom he had so long and truly loved, there was a side of Camille's life which he made little or no attempt to conceal. A man who wrote that he longed for a religion "gay, the friend of delights, of women, of the population and of liberty; a religion where the dance, the spectacles and the festivals are a part of the cult, as was that of the Greeks and Romans,"—



such a man was not likely to be an ascetic in his own private life.

It can never be sufficiently recognised that in judging the men of this time it is necessary to bear in mind that the standard of morality was very low in France, even lower than in the England of that day. A young man living alone in Paris, especially a young man with such a temperament as Camille's, who led even what we should think a fairly decent life, was a being rather out of the common.

Under these circumstances, to labour to find excuses is a profitless employment. A nature like Camille's was not likely to set up a stricter rule of conduct than his compeers, and if one were to endeavour to prove that he did so, at the expense of truth, the portrait of the man thus presented would be absolutely valueless.

Nevertheless, in spite of poverty and of unremunerative and uncongenial drudgery, in spite of endless disappointments and apparently fruitless hopes, these years of Camille's life were not wasted.

He was passing through a period of apprenticeship, as it were, a time of probation before entering on his real career of journalism.

It is certain that he must have written much during these years. There is nothing amateurish in the literary style of the "France Libre," his first important printed work. Not only constant practice in writing, but deep and thorough reading went to the making of that really extraordinary pamphlet.

Probably, together with a large amount of more or less creditable prose, Camille wrote also a vast quantity of more or less bad verses. Most of these poems have dissolved into well-deserved obscurity, but some few have been preserved. M. Claretie, in an appendix to his biography, gives as a specimen some couplets written in honour of a young English lady. One verse will probably convince most people that Camille's

claims to the title of poet were not well-founded.  
“To Miss L . . ., a young English Lady.”

“Pardon, si, sur les traces,  
On me voit chaque soir ;  
Mais pour suivre les graces  
Est-il besoin d’espoir ?  
Sans pouvoir m’en défendre  
Mes jours vont s’écouler,  
Le matin a l’attendre,  
Le soir a l’admirer.”

At this time, as we have said, although Camille’s love for Lucile Duplessis grew with each meeting, his suit appeared too hopeless to be even hinted at to the girl’s parents. M. Duplessis would simply have laughed at him ; Madame Duplessis might have been kinder, but she most certainly would not have consented to think of the young man as her daughter’s lover, desperately poor and desperately unsuccessful as he still was.

For M. Duplessis, although only the son of a village blacksmith, had risen to the creditable position of First Clerk in the Office of the General Control of Finance. It was not likely that such a prosperous and well-considered citizen would seriously consider poor Camille’s claims.

As to Lucile’s own feelings, it is somewhat hard to fathom them ; indeed, at this time she did not know her own heart. She was scarcely more than a child, and, like many young girls, inclined to be morbid. Nevertheless, she was no fool. She had opinions and views of her own. Some of her notebooks and diaries have been preserved, and they show that she was widely read for those days and also accustomed to think for herself.

Sitting up in bed, whilst her family slept, Lucile scribbled down, half furtively, her thoughts and dreams in these little exercise books. To be sure, her ideas

are mainly those of her idol, Rousseau, but there is a strain of originality as well. It is when she is most coloured by her master that one likes her least.

In common with other girls, before and since, she thinks that she will never marry, she doubts her capacity for love. She is a stone, she says, cold as ice,—at the advanced age of sixteen ! She imagines that she hates men, that she is a being set apart.

It is not until 1789 that we begin to see the dawn of a new feeling, and even then it is only an idea which she loves. It is impossible to say when the idea materialised into the shape of shabby, fascinating Camille Desmoulins.

Nevertheless, Lucile is learning that she does not hate one particular man. Later, she will know that she loves him well enough to live for him—well enough to die for him.

It is a quaint, pathetic little manuscript, that early diary of Lucile's ; a manuscript to bring a smile to the lips and tears to the eyes.

So the pretty, wilful girl passed her days and nights in dreams and self-analysis, while the real romance of her life was waiting for her, close at hand, in the person of the impecunious young lawyer, who lived in such poor apartments in the Hôtel Pologne.

Camille cordially hated his dwelling-place, but it had at least this one great advantage ; it was quite near to the house of M. Duplessis. From his garret window the young man could catch an occasional glimpse of the girl he loved, the girl who at that time must have seemed to him almost as inaccessible, as far as he was concerned, as one of those angels to which then and afterwards he so often compared her.

At this period of his life, when he was dejected and shabby, people, no doubt, passed Camille by as an ugly, uninteresting young man. The impression which he made upon outsiders was always immensely dependent upon his mood at the moment, but, apart



from this, he was probably now in appearance very much as he is described a few years later.

The portraits of Camille are contradictory ; they differ so much from one another that we may obtain the impression either of an extremely ugly, or of a decidedly handsome man. Neither is written testimony much more in agreement.

He remarked himself in a letter to Arthur Dillon : " I am not a handsome fellow, it must be allowed," and, if the essayist Sainte-Beuve's father is to be believed : " Desmoulins had a disagreeable exterior."

One who was decidedly inimical to Camille, the writer of the "Souvenirs de la Terreur," says :—

" He had a bilious complexion like Robespierre's, a hard and sinister eye, more like that of an osprey than that of an eagle. I saw him often, and he never seemed to me to be better-looking than at first. I know that there were some who tried to make him out a handsome fellow, but either they were flatterers, or they had never seen him."

Not a pleasing portrait this,—but it comes from an enemy.

It would appear that Camille, while possessing little beauty of feature, could yet, on occasion, seem exceedingly attractive. Possibly the truest idea to which we can attain may be obtained from the few words which are to be found in an anonymous pamphlet, relating to the Sainte-Amaranthe family. The author was a woman, Madame A. R., and she says : " He was ugly, but with that intellectual ugliness which pleases. . . . It was a humorous and pleasing ugliness."

This description certainly agrees far the best with that most attractive of Camille's portraits, painted by Rouillard, which is now to be seen at Versailles. These few words bring him before us irresistibly ; they harmonise with what we learn of him from his writings and letters ; it might almost be

said that they sum up the man himself in a deeper and wider sense than that of mere outward appearance.

To pass from general impressions to details, Camille was very dark and sallow in complexion. His hair was black, and, although in his extreme youth he wore it dressed and powdered, in later years he suffered it, in accordance with the Republican fashion, to grow long and to fall over his shoulders, loose and unpowdered. His eyes were always his best and most striking feature; they were very dark, and extraordinarily bright and expressive. His mouth was large and mobile, and his forehead noticeably fine. For the rest, he was slightly built and not tall, but active and singularly boyish in his movements and bearing.

Such was Camille when his long period of probation was drawing near to its close. Those days of preparation, of weary, unremunerative toil, were at last to bear fruit.

France and the whole world was on the verge of an upheaval, in which Camille's fortune and Camille's life were but as drops in the ocean. Yet that huge cataclysm was to give the obscure young man his opportunity, to throw him to the surface of events as it were. In a day, in an hour, in a moment, Camille Desmoulins was to be transformed from a struggling, unknown lawyer into the idol of Paris. The mere nobody, who was not considered worthy either of praise or blame, was to become someone with immense opportunities for good or evil, using those opportunities both for good and evil. The transformation was sudden and dramatic; there have been few such scenes in the whole course of history.

This is not the place to reconsider at length, for the thousandth time, what causes, gradual or immediate, led to the French Revolution. The smouldering discontent, the class hatred, the sense of injustice

which had been growing beneath the surface of things for centuries had at last reached a point when it could be suppressed no longer. Many causes had contributed to bring matters to a climax, many influences, both open and secret, had been at work during the preceding generation.

The part which Voltaire, Rousseau and the Encyclopædists played in the inception of the Revolution has always been recognised, but the development of their principles was almost necessarily confined to the intellectual classes. Therefore it is essential to look deeper if we would hope to find by what power the masses of the proletariat were stirred in France.

A recent writer, Miss Una Birch, in her most instructive essay on "Secret Societies and the French Revolution," gives a lucid and reasonable explanation of this otherwise almost inexplicable phenomenon. She traces the undoubted disaffection of the lowest classes in the kingdom to the effects of the propaganda work of the Masonic societies and especially of that great and mysterious association which is generally known as the "Order of the Perfectibilists" and of which the Illuminate, Weishaupt, was the moving spirit.

The aim of this society was, literally speaking, the establishment of Rousseau's utopian theories in a practical form, and its accredited agents worked exclusively through the existing Masonic lodges in France, which in time were all infected with the Perfectibilist doctrines.

One of the most famous Parisian lodges was that of the "Neuf Sœurs," to which Camille Desmoulins was associated. The decoration which he wore at the Masonic ceremonies is still preserved, a little triangular badge which bears the image of a pelican tearing its breast. Many of Camille's brother Masons in this lodge afterwards took prominent parts in the Revolution; one need only mention such names as those of



Brissot, La Rochefoucauld, Fauchet, Romme, Danton and Pétion.

It seems certain that an enormous amount of preparatory work was done underground, as it were, by the Masonic societies during the years which immediately preceded the Revolution. In this work it is only fair to presume that Camille played his part, although what exactly that part was we have no means of knowing.

From their very nature the Secret Societies acted in secret, but their influence in shaping events has certainly not been duly estimated by historians. We have no space here to consider the subject further, but fuller information may be found in Miss Birch's most interesting book.

For the French Revolution was no mere inconsequent outbreak, inevitable and foreordained as an upheaval of nature. It was a carefully engineered movement, at least so far as its initial stages were concerned, although later the torrent broke its bounds and overwhelmed those who had at first directed its fury.

The time was coming when the strength of the strongest went for nothing in the conflict with the mighty powers let loose in France. One by one, men were to arise and, in their turn, strive to govern the storm—Mirabeau, Danton and Robespierre, with a mighty host who bore lesser names. One by one they were to sink, powerless and vanquished, overwhelmed by that monster which they themselves had helped to arouse.

It was small wonder that, where these men failed, Camille could not hope to hold his own for long. He was like a feather blown here and there by the varying breeze—no, his own comparison is the truer. He was the weathercock, which showed the way of the wind.

### III

**I**T was in January of the year 1789 that Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre, yielded to the importunities of his people and convoked the States-General, that States-General which, eighteen years before, the "Dictionnaire Universelle de la France" had pronounced obsolete.

The great and unbounded joy with which the down-trodden peasantry of the kingdom heard the news of this convocation was, paradoxically enough, one of the causes of the excesses which followed. The people hoped too much; they hoped for more than any power on earth could give them, above all the well-meaning, ineffective man who was their king.

This being so, their disappointment was the keener when the bright hope faded, when reforms seemed as far away as ever, when, where they had looked for peace, they were met with the sword.

But all this was as yet hidden in the future. In the meantime the spring of this year, afterwards to be known as the first year of Liberty, saw the first assemblies called together in Paris and the provinces for the election of deputies.

The mass of the people heard, with almost incredulous joy, that, at last, they would be able to voice their wrongs, that, at last, the King, their true father, as they still called him, was to hear and consider their complaints. And so, in every corner of France, the "cahiers" or statements were drawn up, those pathetic documents, written as it were with the very life-blood of the people, yet with hope vivifying them

all, the sure and certain hope that the King had only to hear in order to understand, to understand and to make all things new.

They are unspeakably sad reading, these statements of the sufferings and wrongs of a nation, often ill-written and ill-spelt, and plainly drawn up by uneducated, illiterate men.

For it was not only in theory that the lowest classes of the French people nominated and instructed their deputies. The States-General of 1789 was elected on a system of practically universal suffrage, even women, in some instances, being amongst the electors.

In common with almost the whole of France, Camille Desmoulins looked upon this convocation of the Three Estates of the Kingdom as the beginning of a new era, the dawn of a better day, to use the phraseology of the time. For the moment, all his private cares were laid aside, and, eager and alert, he waited for the work of regeneration to begin.

Not that he was altogether content to stand aside and watch others effect this great work. Camille, in his youthful ardour, felt capable of representing the people of his province in the Assembly most worthily—if they would only elect him.

Unfortunately, his townsfolk thought otherwise; perhaps their opinion is not altogether surprising. Notwithstanding all his fine ambitions, the young man had made no mark in Paris, and the Guisards could scarcely be expected to have much faith in his capabilities.

It was now that Camille was to regret bitterly that he had not practised his profession permanently in his native town, like his school comrade Maximilian. Had he been content to remain peacefully at Guise, he might by now have been someone of importance, and worthy of consideration.

For Robespierre, his boyish contemporary, very little his senior, was chosen as one of the representa-



tives for Arras, his birthplace, where he had earned quite a reputation for integrity, justice and rectitude—a reputation which, in the future, he was to remake for himself in Paris.

Camille did not fail in his ambitions for want of trying. He hastened back to Guise before the first electoral meetings took place, and it is evident that he canvassed for himself most diligently. He managed to secure the support of three hundred electors of Vermandois, and he was one of those sent from Guise to Laon as a deputy to the preliminary assemblies. He advanced no further than this; indeed, he can scarcely have expected to be himself elected to the States-General.

It was otherwise where his father was concerned. M. Desmoulins, senior, might have been sent to Paris as one of the representatives of his province if he had chosen to say the word. He was a man of importance in the district, and was, moreover, universally liked and respected. M. Desmoulins, however, was not an ambitious man; his son, indeed, considered him culpably lacking in enterprise and initiative. He was also disinclined to accept the position on the score of ill-health, and, for one reason and another, much to Camille's chagrin and disappointment, he was not amongst the deputies who were finally elected. The young man could only console himself with the reflection that the representative nominated by Guise was his cousin and former benefactor, de Viefville des Essarts.

At the end of 1788 or the beginning of 1789, before the elections had really commenced, it would appear that Camille had produced his first pamphlet. The "Moniteur," in giving a list of publications which appeared at this time, mentions "La Philosophie au Peuple Français" par M. Desmoulins. As far as is known, there is not a copy of this essay extant, but the writer in the "Moniteur" states that the author

develops the principles of a plan for a Constitution. It would seem that the pamphlet was only an earlier form of "La France Libre."

The work does not, in any case, appear to have attracted particular attention. Camille's name was unknown and carried no authority, and, moreover, an overwhelming mass of political writings of more or less interest was published at this time. This was principally on account of a decree issued on July 5th, 1788, in which the King invited information and memorials on the "present decree" to be sent by "all the learned and instructed persons of his Kingdom."

At about the same time Camille also wrote an ode upon the "Opening of the States-General," but neither does this appear to have brought him any special fame. It is exceedingly bad poetry, although its sentiments are irreproachable. The chief interest of the effusion lies in the fact that it is distinctly monarchical in tone. King Louis is compared to the greatest emperors of Rome, and called upon, in high-flown language, to regenerate his country.

After manifold delays and postponements the elections were finally completed, and on May 5th, 1789, the States-General was formally opened at Versailles with great pomp and ceremony.

Many writers have described this day and the mingled feelings which the proceedings aroused both in themselves and in the mass of the people. For our present purpose, since it is Camille's point of view which we are considering, we cannot do better than give the account in his own words, used in writing to his father.

It is now that the young man's letters become really valuable. They describe briefly all that happened at Paris and Versailles within Camille's ken, in a style which is, in its way, quite inimitable.

Camille had apparently returned to the capital especially to see this ceremony, and he writes to his father enthusiastically on the following day:—

“Yesterday was one of the brightest days of my life. One must needs have been a very bad citizen not to take part in the festivity of that sacred day. I believe that if I had only come from Guise to Paris to see this procession of the three orders and the opening of our States-General, I should not regret this pilgrimage. I only had one cause for discontent, and that lay in not seeing you amongst our deputies. One of my comrades has been more fortunate than I, this is Robespierre, deputy for Arras. He had the sense to plead in his own province. . . . One noticed yesterday the duke d’Orléans in his rank as deputy to the bailliage of Crespy, and Count Mirabeau with the dress of the Third Estate and a sword. . . . The costume of the nobility, exactly the same as that of the dukes and peers, was magnificent. . . . How proudly our deputies carried themselves! they had *caput intra nubes*. . . . The abbé de Bourville, one of my friends, took me to dine with his uncle, Chevalier M . . . , Major-General. It was there that I noticed how the bulk of the nobility were irritated against M. Necker.

“They cried by thousands and thousands: ‘Long live the King! Long live the Third Estate!’ There were some cheers for the duke d’Orléans, none for the cloth of gold, nor for the cassocks. The face of the King was alight with joy. It is four years since he heard the cry: ‘Long live the King!’ . . .

“I wrote yesterday to Mirabeau to try, if possible, to be put on the staff of the famous gazette which will describe all that takes place at the States-General. Thousands are subscribing to it here, and it will bring the author 100,000 crowns, they say. Shall I subscribe for you?”

It is easy to imagine Camille, dressed in all his best, hastening along the road to Versailles on that brilliant spring morning.

The royal town was ablaze with flags and decorations glittering in the May sunlight. It seemed a day of festival for rich and poor alike.

We can picture the young man, his vivid, ugly face alight with enthusiasm, standing wedged amidst the



close-packed crowd, cheering the sombrely dressed deputies of the Third Estate as they passed, cheering the King, too, heartily enough, and the King's cousin, the future "Equality" Orléans, but silent when the Queen passed, beautiful and proud as ever, unhappy both for public and private reasons, yet hiding her sorrow under a mask of cold indifference.

In the letters which Camille wrote to his father during the month of June it is easy to see what a change had come over the young man's life. The days of weary waiting and preparation were over, all was stir and excitement around him; Paris was in a state of effervescence, and in such an atmosphere Camille was in his element.

True, Chateaubriand describes him at this time as "sallow, shabby and needy," and we know for a certainty that he was as much in need of money as ever, but he was beginning to feel within himself a measure of power.

He was even conscious, rightly or wrongly, of being considered by others to be a person of importance. He writes on June 3rd:—

"I received your letter upon my return from Versailles; where I went to see our dear deputies. . . . I dined there with our deputies from Dauphiny and Brittany; they all know me as a patriot, and they all pay me attentions which flatter me."

In the same letter he describes very vividly his manner of life at that time:—

"I am at present occupied with a patriotic work. The pleasure that I experience in hearing the admirable plans of our zealous citizens at the club and in certain cafés leads me there.

"I left this letter upon my desk. A week has passed. To-morrow, Sunday, I return to Versailles. I go to inflame others and to be myself inflamed. We are about to enter upon a great week. That which has passed at Versailles ought to give marvellous courage to our deputies. . . . The States-General has attracted to Paris a crowd of strangers and of

French from all the provinces. The city is full, Versailles the same. . . . You have no idea of the joy which our regeneration gives me. Liberty must be a beautiful thing, since Cato tore out his entrails sooner than have a master."

In a very few words Camille gives us here an extraordinarily clear impression of the state of Paris during those fervent midsummer days.

We have only one description to match it, and that is to be found in the Journal of our own English traveller, Arthur Young. The impressions of this writer may well find a place here; they supplement and accentuate, as it were, those of Camille. There were odd points of likeness in the characters of these two men, opposite as they were in many respects.

"Paris," writes Young, "is at present in such a ferment about the States-General, now holding at Versailles, that conversation is absolutely absorbed by them. Not a word of anything else talked of. . . . The business going forward at present in the pamphlet shops of Paris is incredible. . . . Every hour produces something new. Thirteen came out to-day, sixteen yesterday, and ninety-two last week. . . . At Desein's and some other shops here one can scarcely squeeze from the door to the counter. . . . Nineteen-twentieths of these products are in favour of liberty. . . . It is easy to conceive the spirit that must thus be raised among the people. But the coffee-houses in the Palais Royal present yet more singular and astonishing spectacles; they are not only crowded within, but other expectant crowds are at the doors and windows, listening *à gorge déployé* to certain orators who from chairs or tables harangue each his little audience; the eagerness with which they are heard and the thunder of applause they receive for every sentiment of more than common hardness or violence against the present government cannot easily be imagined."

Probably by this time Camille had ceased to make any pretence of practising his profession. He was occupied, as he told his father, in writing his first great literary work "*La France Libre*."

It is only fair to Camille and his principles to say

that he wished to publish this pamphlet then and there. It was not by his will that the production was postponed until the dawn of that day of July 14th, which changed the whole current of public opinion in France, by proving that the populace had might as well as right upon their side.

However, the printer Momoro was cautious. This man, who was afterwards to proclaim himself the most ardent of democrats, the "first printer of the National Liberty," declined for the moment to bring out such an incendiary piece of work as this of Camille's. He preferred to wait events—and it was not long before events developed themselves.

This refusal of Momoro to print his work exasperated Camille beyond measure. He writes to his father after June 20th:—

"I have had a tremendous disagreement with my printer and publisher; if I had the cash I would buy a press, the monopoly of these rascals revolts me so much. It rains pamphlets, each more brilliant than the last."

Meanwhile things did not advance so rapidly at Versailles as had been hoped. Step by step the members of the Third Estate fought for their rights, hampered and obstructed by the deputies of the two aristocratic orders, who obstinately opposed the smallest measures of reform.

It is not perfectly certain that Camille was at Versailles on that famous 20th of June, when the Deputies of the people were expelled from the hall of the Assembly on the feeble pretext that it was necessary to prepare it for the Royal séance. All the world knows how, in the pouring rain, they repaired to the dilapidated open tennis court, still to be seen in the Rue St. François at Versailles, where, with only one exception, they unanimously took the solemn oath never to dissolve until France was given a Constitution.



Although Camille does not, in his letters, definitely mention the episode of the Tennis Court oath, it is very possible that he was present amidst the curious crowd, who watched the proceedings from the covered galleries round the building. In any case he is full of enthusiasm at the firm stand taken by the popular deputies, and he says positively that he was at Versailles on Monday and Tuesday, June 22nd and 23rd.

It would certainly appear from what he writes in a letter to his father on June 24th that he was present at the Royal sitting on the latter date. He gives a brief and pointed account of that historical scene:—

“The sitting lasted thirty-five minutes. The King annulled all that the Third Estate had done, threw an apple of discord amongst the three orders, proposed fifty-three articles of a crafty edict, where he feigned to accord part of what the cahiers demanded; he finished by saying ‘No remonstrances’ and concluded the sitting. The nobles applauded, a great part of the clergy did the same. The most mournful silence in the Third Estate. The two orders departed, with the exception of thirty or forty deputies, who remained with the Third. It was eleven o’clock. The Third Estate remained assembled until three. They protested, confirmed the deliberations of the 17th and annulled all which had been done.

“M. de Brézé came to order them to separate. ‘The King,’ said Mirabeau, ‘can cause us to be killed; tell him that we all wait death; but that he need not hope that we shall separate until we have made the Constitution.’

“M. de Brézé came a second time; the same response and they continued their deliberations. They declared by a second decree their persons to be sacred and inviolable, by a third decree they declared that they could not obey the will of the Prince, and ordained that the door of the Assembly should always be open to the nation.

“In a word, all have shown a Roman firmness, and are resolved to seal our liberties with their blood. All Paris is aflame; the Palais Royal is as full as an egg; they applaud the duke d’Orléans with transport. The King passes; everyone is silent: M. Bailly, President of the Assembly, appears, all clap their hands; they cry: ‘Long live the Nation!’”

It will be noticed that Mirabeau's famous answer to the order of the King conveyed to the Assembly by de Brézé is, as given by Camille, at the same time briefer and more dignified than in the more generally accepted version. Moreover, he does not put into Mirabeau's mouth the well-known phrase, "We will not be expelled save at the point of the bayonet," a phrase which many modern historians are inclined to consider more or less mythical.

In any case Camille's impromptu description of this event shows many of the qualities of a good journalist. The facts are all there, presented dramatically enough and without a superfluous word, and at the end of this brief passage the state of public opinion in Paris is presented to us very impressively.

The hostility of the Court party against the rebellious Third Estate grew from the day of the Royal sitting onwards. The King temporised, yielding as usual first on one side, then on the other, but his wife and ministers were always with him, and naturally they and their followers obtained the greatest concessions.

Louis was induced, by the advice of the Queen and his brothers, to send for a large number of mercenary troops, and these German and Swiss soldiers were stationed in several camps near Versailles and in the Champ-de-Mars. These regiments were intended to intimidate Paris and the popular section of the States-General, now known as the National Assembly, and to cast the fear of death upon those who dared to resist the royal authority. As a matter of fact the chief effect produced by the presence of the troops was to irritate the citizens of Paris still further and to suggest to them the possibility of an armed resistance since arms were to be employed against them.

The temper of the city was becoming dangerous; it required very little to stir the people to fury. It is a foretaste of the horrors which were to follow which

Camille gives us in describing the slaughter of a police spy in the Palais Royal at the beginning of July. He tells us that the unfortunate wretch was stripped, thrown into the basin of one of the fountains in the garden, and forced under the water. He was stoned and beaten with canes, and one of his eyes was knocked out of its socket. Camille concludes by saying that: "His punishment lasted from midday until half-past five, and he had quite ten thousand executioners."

Camille, it must be noticed, has no word of pity for this unfortunate servant of a cruel system. He speaks of him only as a "vile rascal." It would almost seem as though he were infected with the madness of the crowd, and considered such rough justice allowable if not commendable. It is the first sign in his writings of that dangerous theory that the mob can do no wrong, that, as he wrote afterwards in his journal: "This much calumniated people is moved by principles of equity; it has wholesome notions in this respect and nothing angers it so much as injustice."

Camille was to learn for himself, five years later, how little one can trust to the justice and equity of the mob.

In his letters written at the beginning of July Camille speaks much of the "thirty thousand men around Paris" and of the "three or four little camps garnished with artillery," but he tells his father also that many of the soldiers, including numbers of the French guards themselves, are deserting from their regiments and have come to espouse the cause of the people in that "camp of patriots," the Palais Royal.

It is with more triumph than apprehension that he writes these words at the beginning of one of his letters: "The conflagration increases: *Jam proximus ardet Ucalegon.*"



#### IV

**T**HE morning of the 12th of July, 1789, dawned bright and sunny, that day which was to be the most momentous in all the life of Camille Desmoulins.

He can have had no idea when he awoke of what this summer Sunday was to bring forth, of that extraordinary event which was to transform him with dramatic suddenness from a briefless lawyer to a personage of the first importance in Paris and in France.

It is not clear whether at this time Camille was staying at Versailles, or whether, as is more probable, he only hastened there from Paris in the morning, to learn at first hand what had passed in the Assembly and at the Château. It was, in any case, at Versailles that he heard the news which fell like a thunderbolt upon him and upon all the members of the popular party. Necker, the people's minister, the idol of the moment in Paris, had been dismissed from office, and was even then hurrying to his Swiss exile.

The personality of Necker had an extraordinary hold upon the populace at this time. In spite of very various opinions of the character of the Swiss financier, there can be no doubt that he possessed this power of imposing his own self-belief upon others. The Parisians were soon to discover that this saint of theirs was only whitewashed plaster; in the meantime, his very name could stir them to enthusiasm or fury.

Camille must have returned hastily to Paris on hearing the news of Necker's dismissal. It is hard to say

whether there was any definite plan in his mind of inciting the populace to rebellion. Probably his first idea was to make his way to the Palais Royal and there to tell the assembled crowd his tragic tidings. A dramatic situation of this kind had always the strongest appeal for Camille; he had the child's love for imparting news, good or bad.

A dense throng filled the gardens of the Palais Royal. At the least computation there were six thousand persons present, of all ages and classes, all irritated and excited by the presence of the foreign troops round the capital, all knowing little or nothing, and therefore ready to believe anything.

The streets had been placarded overnight with enormous posters, inviting peaceable citizens to remain within doors, to feel no alarm, to gather in no crowd. But if these placards were intended to reassure, which is doubtful, we may be certain that the very fact of their appearance in the city would have exactly the opposite effect.

It was into this crowd that Camille made his way, flushed and heated. The young man was almost beside himself with anger and excitement, and no doubt these feelings were plainly visible in his face.

One can imagine those of his friends and acquaintances who were present crowding around him to hear the latest news from Versailles, one can almost hear Camille's stammering answers, nearly incoherent probably, as he strove for words in his nervous excitement. More and more people pressed towards him, trying to catch his news, realising that there was something seriously amiss.

It was now, it would appear from his own words, that the definite intention came to Camille to stir up the crowd to rebellion.

He himself gave in his writings two descriptions of this, the great day of his life. The first is to be found in a letter to his father dated July 16th, the second is

contained in the fifth number of the "Vieux Cordeleur," where Camille described the scene once more in detail to remind the fickle mob of this, his greatest service to Liberty and to France.

These two versions agree in the main, although the later account is the more detailed, and the words and phrases have evidently been carefully thought out and polished. Probably one is not far wrong in thinking that these expressions represent what Camille afterwards thought that he ought to have said rather than the actual words which he used. His call to arms appears here less an impulse of the moment than a carefully premeditated action.

But the first description was written whilst the episode and the events which arose from it still absorbed Camille, body and soul. The very incoherence of its diction stamps it as a true relation of what took place.

"My very dear father," Camille begins his letter. "Now at last one can write to you, the letter will arrive. Myself, I have posted a sentinel to-day in the post-office, and there is no more a secret cabinet where the letters are unsealed. How the face of things is changed since three days ago ! On Sunday all Paris was dismayed at the dismissal of M. Necker ; I had tried to stir up the people, yet nobody took arms. I mixed with the crowd ; they saw my zeal ; they surrounded me ; they pressed me to mount upon a table ; in a moment I am surrounded by six thousand persons.

" 'Citizens !' I said then. 'You know that the nation has demanded that Necker should retain office, that a monument should be raised to him ; he has been dismissed ! Could they defy you more insolently ? After this, they will dare anything, and for this night they meditate, they prepare perhaps, a St. Bartholomew for the patriots.'

"I was stifled by the rush of thoughts which flowed into my mind. I spoke without ordering my words.

" 'To arms !' I cried. 'To arms ! Take, all of you, green cockades, the colour of hope !'

"I recollect that I finished with these words : 'The



infamous police are here. Ah, well, let them watch me, let them observe me carefully. Yes, it is I who call my brothers to liberty !' And, lifting a pistol, 'At least, they shall not take me alive, and I shall know how to die gloriously. Only one misfortune can touch me, it is that of seeing France become enslaved.'

"Then I descended ; they embraced me, they stifled me with caresses.

" 'My friend,' said several, 'we are going to make a guard for you ; we will not abandon you, we will go where you wish.'

"I said that I did not wish to have the command, and that I would only be a soldier of the fatherland. I took a green ribbon and fastened it the first to my hat. With what rapidity the conflagration spread !"

Camille's review of the circumstances, written nearly five years later, somehow lacks the life of the former version. Yet it is not without a particular interest of its own.

"It was half-past two," he writes. "I came to sound the people. My anger against the despots was turned to despair. I saw that the groups, although keenly moved and dismayed, were not ripe for an upheaval. Three young men appeared to me to be animated by more vehement courage ; they held each other by the hand. I saw that they had come to the Palais Royal with the same design as myself ; some passive citizens followed them.

" 'Sirs,' I said to them, 'here is the beginning of a civic enlistment ; it is necessary for one of us to devote himself, and, mounted upon a table, to harangue the people.'

" 'Mount, then !'

"I consented. I was rather lifted upon the table than mounted there. Scarcely was I raised than I saw myself surrounded by an immense crowd. Here is my short harangue, which I shall never forget.

" 'Citizens, there is not a moment to be lost. I come from Versailles. M. Necker is dismissed. This recalls the tocsin of a St. Bartholomew to patriots ; this evening all the German and Swiss battalions will come from the Champ-de-Mars to assassinate us. There only remains to us one resource ; it is to

take up arms and to adopt cockades by which we may know each other.'

"I had tears in my eyes, and I spoke with a vigour that I could never again either recall or paint. My motion was received with infinite applause; I continued.

" 'What colours will you have?' Someone cried: 'Choose.'

" 'Will you have green, the colour of hope, or the blue of Cincinnatus, the colour of American liberty and of democracy?'

"Voices were raised: 'Green! The colour of hope!'

"Then I cried: 'Friends, the signal is given. Here are the spies and satellites of the police who watch us. I will not fall living into their hands.' Then, drawing two pistols from my pocket, I said: 'Let all citizens imitate me!'"

It was in this fashion that Camille Desmoulins made the one great speech of his life, and, by a strange paradox, he, whose elocutionary powers were ever of the weakest, leapt into fame by means of oratory. But indeed it must be confessed that his outburst owed its success mainly to the fact that it was wonderfully well-timed. It came precisely at the right moment.

Thus Camille is the central figure of one of the most vivid and memorable scenes in the Revolution. We can picture him, reared above the madly excited crowd on his rickety platform, composed of a chair mounted on a table and supported by one Citizen Beaubourg.

For that instant, stammering, insignificant Camille was beside himself—nay, inspired. With face aglow and black eyes blazing, with his long, dishevelled hair flung back wildly and his hoarse, weak voice strained to the utmost to reach to the outskirts of the crowd, he flung out the words which called a nation to arms.

For it was not only in Camille's own opinion that this speech made him one of the most prominent men in Paris. Even those who had never heard his name spoke of the act and its immediate effect. Here is the description given by Helen Maria Williams, that

extraordinary and eccentric woman who was in France at the time.

“I have heard several persons mention a young man of insignificant figure, who, the day before the Bastille was taken, got up on a chair in the Palais Royal and harangued the multitude, conjuring them to make a struggle for their liberty and asserting that now the moment was arrived. They listened to his eloquence with the most eager attention and, when he had instructed as many as could hear him at one time, he requested them to depart, and repeated his harangue to a new set of auditors.”

This account would seem to imply that Miss Williams believed the address to have been more or less premeditated, an opinion which is certainly supported by Camille's own latest version of the affair.

It is the view also which Heinrich von Sybel takes in his great and learned history of the French Revolution.

“Camille Desmoulins,” he says, “incited the people to resistance from the windows [*sic*] of the Café Foy. The populace had been so well prepared that the effect of his address was tremendous.”

It is interesting to compare the point of view of an ardent royalist with regard to this event and to Camille himself. Here is how Bertrand de Moleville describes it in his “Annals” :—

“The news [of Necker's dismissal] was not confirmed till between eleven and twelve o'clock by persons coming from Versailles to the Palais Royal, where the concourse of Patriots was such that it was hardly possible to take half a dozen steps in the garden without being stopped by a group. In the middle of this immense crowd, Camille Desmoulins, one of the most inflammatory Demoniacs of the Revolution, mounting upon a table, cried out with a thrilling voice : ‘Citizens, Necker is dismissed.’ ”

The remainder of the speech de Moleville gives practically in the same words as Camille.



There stands a bronze statue in the garden of the Palais Royal, which represents Camille, as the sculptor, Boverie, imagines him to have appeared upon this, the greatest day of his life. The figure has a lonely and deserted air, for the glory of the Palais Royal is departed. This "Camp of the patriots," as Camille called it, has become a desert, with here and there a solitary passer-by to accentuate its emptiness. Only those who would fain recall the memories of the wild past seek for them here, as though the shadows of the dead might still be expected to haunt the stage where they played their strenuous parts.

In Camille's own day his exploit was commemorated in a more humble fashion. Last summer at an old pottery very far from Paris, in the mountains of the Bernese Oberland, we discovered an earthenware plate, which bears the date 1789. On it, in crude blues and yellows, the hero of July 12th is represented, standing on the rickety table, with pistol and hat upraised. And I do not think that Camille was the man to despise even such homely fame as this.

Thus Camille's first public act was performed; from henceforth, as Jules Claretie says: "In him are incarnate now, and shall be incarnate for the future—the Revolution and Hope."

When the young man descended, panting and exhausted, from his improvised tribune, he was seized with rough friendliness and borne in triumph round the gardens. The trees were stripped of their leaves to furnish the green cockades, and the excited crowd surged out into the streets, echoing Camille's cry: "To arms! To arms!"

They happened to pass the shop of a Swiss image-maker, one Curtius, in whose window were displayed the effigies of Necker and of another popular idol, the duke d'Orléans. The mob broke into the shop forthwith, seized the busts and raised them as standards, swathing the image of Necker in a scarf of

crape. A little girl watched the stormy scene in frightened excitement. She was Curtius' niece, afterwards to be known all the world over as Madame Tussaud.

In this manner the procession paraded the streets, growing in numbers at every by-road and alley which flowed, as it were, into the main stream.

Camille was doubtless borne in the van, although he himself does not mention the part which he played ; however, it is not likely that the Parisians were willing to relinquish readily this new idol of theirs, the man who had given them their rallying cry.

For some little time the procession marched through the streets undisturbed. Possibly if no opposition had been made to them, they would have dispersed peaceably, at any rate for the time. They had, at the moment, no particular object in view.

But the foreign troops were thickly distributed throughout and around Paris. The procession was almost bound to come into collision with them, and the feeling of hostility against the Swiss and German mercenaries was very strong amongst the mob. What happened was only that which might have been expected.

Several regiments were hastily summoned from the camp in the Champ-de-Mars and opposed the crowd as it debouched into the Champs Elysées. The soldiers of the Royal Allemand retreated before showers of stones and other missiles, but the mob was driven back when the cavalry under Prince Lambesc charged upon the people, literally trampling them under the feet of the horses.

Although several of the crowd were more or less seriously wounded, one man only was killed, a soldier who was assisting to carry the bust of Necker. But this was enough to rouse the people to madness. The first blood had been shed in the Revolution.

For an instant the mob was driven back, intimidated.

Lambesc must have congratulated himself upon the success of his measures. He had not reckoned on a certain amount of reorganising power which existed in these apparently undisciplined throngs. Moreover, a still more important factor had now to be reckoned with : the defection of the regular troops.

A regiment of the French guards had been known to be disaffected, and Lambesc had tried to overawe them by placing them in their barracks under the supervision of a squadron of loyal dragoons. His precaution was useless ; when the mutinous regiment heard that fighting was going forward in the Tuileries Gardens, they broke through their guard, driving the cavalry before them, and joined the mob, ranging themselves between the people and the Royal troops.

The crowd re-formed, thus supported by the guards, and presented a solid front when another charge was attempted.

The troops were driven back, without having succeeded in dispersing the people, and retired sullenly into their camps, where they awaited orders which never came. Versailles, as usual, was unprepared for an emergency.

The mob had put its strength to the test and it had been victorious. The undisciplined throng had driven back the feared and hated troops ; henceforth the soldiers might be hated, but they would not be feared in the same measure.

There was little sleep in Paris that night. The people were terrified at what they had done, when there was time for consideration. After all, the town was practically invested by the King's troops ; what could the Parisians expect but swift and terrible punishment ?

A spirit of fear and anxiety was abroad. Men might be seen lying with their ears to the ground, awaiting the first sound of the cannon.

To add to the general alarm, bands of smugglers



both from within and without the city seized the opportunity offered by the unrest and confusion to burn the Customs' barriers, and the sight of these conflagrations gave rise to the belief that the mercenary troops had already begun to assault the city.

According to Camille's account, people attacked and plundered the armourers' shops, to provide themselves with weapons as early as this Sunday evening. The cafés were full until a late hour ; a plan was growing in men's minds, but it must be discussed, thought out.

Camille, as far as we can gather, was here, there and everywhere. With General Danican, he seems to have been looked upon as one of the leaders of the movement, although, according to his own showing, he had refused to take the command.

As he wrote himself in later years : " I had at that time all the daring of the Revolution."

On Monday morning the tocsin sounded from the belfries of Paris ; the people found themselves with at least one definite object in view. They must be armed, by fair means or foul. It is probable that few, as yet, contemplated more than self-defence, but with an armed mob it needs only a word to incite them to go farther and to attack in their turn.

That long summer day was stifflingly hot ; there was thunder in the air in more senses than one.

And Paris was arming itself. The people neglected their daily work ; only the smithy shops were busy, crowded with men who brought weapons to be made or mended. Scythes and daggers were fixed on to poles, and the blacksmiths were beating out pikes, those terrible pikes which were to make the Paris mob more formidable than an army of trained soldiers. Early in the morning a number of men and women attacked and broke into the Garde Meuble, where they found a great quantity of ancient and modern

arms which they promptly distributed amongst themselves.

Meanwhile, at the Hôtel de Ville the Revolution was in process of organisation. The central committee of Parisian electors, which had been sitting there since July 4th, took over the government of the insurrection.

They proclaimed that a voluntary force of forty-eight thousand men must immediately be raised for the defence of the capital, each of the eighty electoral districts furnishing a battalion eight hundred strong. This force, in the formation of which the Government was in no way consulted, was first called the Parisian Militia, and it was under the command of M. de la Salle d'Offrémont, the director of the Arsenal.

Although, of course, at such short notice it was impossible to think of providing uniforms, a badge was chosen for this Militia or National Guard, a badge which was later to become of world-wide fame. The red and blue of the city and the white of the army were joined in one cockade to form the famous tri-colour.

This central committee also busied itself with the arming of the mob.

It is not easy to say precisely how or by whom the impulse was given which led the Fauxbourgs St. Antoine and St. Marceau to first conceive the idea of taking the Bastille. It is true that in some of the "cahiers" the destruction of this prison was expressly demanded; the desire was evidently a widespread one.

Certainly the plan was not entirely new. In a letter to his father at the end of June or the beginning of July, Camille says that at the time when the French guards first mutinied there was a question of marching at once upon the Bastille or the fortress of Vincennes, although the scheme came to nothing for the time being.

It seems that the thought was dormant in the minds of many. Repeated vaguely again and again, the germ of an idea spread from one to another, until it grew into a definite plan. To the inhabitants of the two great "slum" fauxbourgs the Bastille was the incarnation of tyranny and oppression. The great, lowering building dominated the district. Legends were rife amongst the people of hundreds of prisoners incarcerated there, forgotten by all the world. These stories were false in the main, as the mob was soon to prove for itself, but the theory was the same.

Here was the Bastille, a concrete emblem of tyranny. The people were in arms against tyrants; let them overthrow the great dungeon.

There was besides a more practical reason for the assault. The fortress was connected with a huge arsenal, containing a vast quantity of arms. It was weapons and ammunition which the people required; therefore when the men of St. Marceau had obtained them from the Invalides, St. Antoine resolved that its necessity should be supplied by the Bastille.

The affair was not unpremeditated. Regular plans for taking the fortress were suggested to the Electoral Committee at the Hôtel de Ville. Some suggested huge catapults, like those used by the ancients, while Santerre, the Brewer, brought forward a scheme which was even more ingenious. He proposed to set fire to the Bastille by means of oil of turpentine and phosphorus, forced through the pumps of fire engines. So feasible did this plan appear to the Committee that the engines were actually taken to the spot, although it was not found possible to use them.

Some historians assert that matters were brought to a climax when a courier was intercepted by the mob on his way from Versailles to de Launay, governor of the Bastille, carrying an order which enjoined that the fortress was to be held to the last extremity.

It is said that this order was carried straightway



to the Hôtel de Ville, and that the Central Committee at once resolved to attack the Bastille, before the Governor could receive another despatch to the same effect.

Although we have no absolute proof of the fact, there can be little doubt that Camille was busied during this day in stirring up the people. Very likely he caught up and propagated everywhere the idea of taking the Bastille. He had the instincts of the agitator and the journalist in a sufficiently large measure to make him see the importance of giving the mob an objective.

Of one thing we may be quite certain; Camille was not in the background during that feverish Monday. Popularity was very sweet to him now and always; moreover, it was a new sensation to him to be someone of consequence, and he was not, at this or any other time, particularly level-headed.

So the hot, steaming day wore on. Towards evening there was a heavy thunderstorm which drove the Parisians to take shelter for a time, but meanwhile another storm was brewing, which was to break in its full fury next day.

The following morning dawned dull and cloudy; the sun did not shine at the breaking of this day, the most momentous in all the stormy history of France. July 14th—the first day of the first year of Liberty, the day when the earliest blow was struck at the foundations of the monarchy—all this and more the mention of that summer morning was to mean in after years.

The Fauxbourgs of St. Antoine and St. Marceau were astir at dawn; men had slept but little that night. They were ready now for whatever the day might bring forth.

Early that morning a deputation from the Hôtel de Ville, headed by the Procureur du Roi, had led the insurgents to the Invalides and forced M. de Sombreuil

to open the gates and allow the mob to provide themselves with weapons out of his vast store of arms.

Camille was one of those who accompanied the populace to the Invalides. He tells his father that : " I descended myself under the dome at the risk of being stifled. I saw there, as it seemed to me, at least a hundred thousand muskets. I armed myself with a brand-new one, provided with a bayonet and with two pistols."

It was in this way that the mob armed themselves ; such as were able to do so. The rest must needs wait for their weapons.

Gradually the crowd gathered, always concentrating upon one point. Towards ten o'clock in the morning a huge throng was assembled round the gates of the Bastille, and de Launay, the Governor, tried to intimidate them with a volley of musketry. This fusillade had quite a contrary effect ; it enraged the insurgents, and the noise attracted a host of others to join them. From the towers of the Bastille could be seen the advance of a surging mob from all directions, a mob which thickened with every moment that passed.

If the fortress had not been absolutely inadequately garrisoned and provisioned, it would have been impregnable. The eight huge towers and the walls ten feet thick might indeed have resisted any human onslaught. But de Launay had but a hundred and thirty-eight men to support him, of whom one half were veteran pensioners. There was no means of preventing the water supply from being cut off—and, moreover, he had but two sacks of flour.

The Governor's only hope was in the succour which he momentarily expected from de Besenval, who commanded the troops in the Champ-de-Mars. That succour never came.

And then the extraordinary assault took place, which is known to history as the taking of the Bastille. The event has been described again and again, yet

historians of every shade of thought agree in this : that the thing was an apparent impossibility, accomplished in an incredibly short space of time.

The first entrance of the mob into the fortress was effected by two half-pay soldiers, Louis Tournay and Aubin Bonnemère, who contrived to climb in by way of the Governor's house, and to lower the outer drawbridge. Once within, the men of the fauxbourgs beat back all resistance by sheer force of numbers. The stand made against them was pitifully weak ; the small garrison fought half-heartedly, and one only of the great guns was fired on the people.

De Launay was urged, by his own men, to surrender, but, after waiting for de Besenval's relief as long as he dared, he resolved to blow up the fortress himself, rather than yield it to the mob. As he was in the act of applying a match to the powder-magazine, some of the garrison interposed, and forced him to capitulate. He did so after an assurance from Elie and Hulin, once officers in the French Guards, now leaders of the mob, that : " on the honour of French soldiers, no injury shall be done to you."

If the matter had rested with these two, both brave and honourable men, this promise would have been faithfully kept, but in spite of all their efforts, the mob massacred the unfortunate de Launay and de Lorme, his second in command, as they were being taken to the Hôtel de Ville. During the actual assault ninety-eight of the besiegers and one only of the besieged were killed.

With regard to Camille's part in this, the first great " day " of the Revolution, he says, writing to his father on July 16th, that he hastened to the scene at the first sound of the cannon.

" But the Bastille was already taken in two and a half hours, a thing which appears miraculous. The Bastille could have been held six months, if anything could be held against French impetuosity ; the Bastille was taken by the citizens and by private soldiers without a chief, without one single officer ! "



We learn, from another source, that Camille was one of the first to mount the ramparts of the conquered fortress.

In an incredibly short space of time, all was over. The Bastille had fallen ; the victorious leaders handed the great keys of the fortress to the Paris Municipality—and it was now that the invincible, omnipotent mob sullied their victory. Not only were de Launay and several of his garrison cruelly murdered, but also de Flesselles, Provost of the Merchants, who, men said, had not whole-heartedly supported the insurrection.

A wild night followed that wild day. The people of Paris were mad with success, yet haunted by the fear of reprisals. They ransacked the Bastille in the search for prisoners. Only seven were found, seven miserable, terrified beings, knowing nothing of what had passed, conscious only of a hell-like din raging outside their cells. They were carried in triumph through the streets of Paris, heroes for this one night, forgotten next day in the swift rush of events.

And under this date of July 14th, when the French people took the first step on that road which was to lead them to victory and their king to the guillotine, that same King Louis wrote in his diary the one word : “Nothing.”

Camille gave to his father and gives to us a vivid picture of this night and the following day.

“All the streets were lighted,” he says. “They threw out into the road chairs, tables, casks, piles of everything, carts and carriages, in order to make barricades and to break the legs of horses. There were 70,000 men under arms this night. The French guard patrolled with us. I mounted guard all night long. . . .

“Yesterday morning [the 15th] the alarmed King went to the National Assembly ; he threw himself upon the mercy of the Assembly and all his sins were forgiven. Our deputies reconducted him in triumph to the Castle. . . . Target tells

me that it was a fine procession. In the evening the procession was still more beautiful ; one hundred and fifty deputies of the National Assembly, clergy, nobility and commons were mounted in the King's carriages to carry the news of the peace to Paris.

"They arrived at half-past three at the Place Louis XV, descended from their vehicles, and went on foot to the Hôtel de Ville, traversing the Rue St. Honoré. . . . I marched, with sword drawn, beside Target, with whom I conversed ; he was full of inexpressible joy. It shone from the eyes of everyone, and I have never seen anything like it. It is impossible that the triumph of Paulus Emilius was more splendid."

In that hour of triumphant joy, when the millenium seemed at hand, to Camille and others around him there came no foreknowledge of a day, not long distant for some of them, when they would retrace their steps over the self-same route, on a very different errand.

For on that later day, the order of the journey would be so far changed that, starting at the gates of the Conciergerie, and "traversing the Rue St. Honoré," it would end, and not begin, at the Place of the Revolution, heretofore known as the Place Louis XV.

## V

**I**N one day, in one moment, Camille Desmoulins had become a famous man.

On July 11th he was a disregarded, shabby little lawyer, with journalistic tendencies, of no account to anybody except his few friends, and treated, even by them, more with contemptuous kindness than with respect.

On July 12th he was suddenly thrown into prominent relief against the flaming background of armed rebellion which he had helped to stir up. The transition was rapid; almost too rapid for Camille's equilibrium. Decidedly his head was turned, and it is not surprising that this should have been the case. It must always be intoxicating to be set up as a popular idol, and this is true, above all, of the heroes of that fickle Parisian mob, which is always ready to fly to extremes, whether of love or hate.

And it was ever part of Camille's nature to love praise, admiration and popularity. For the very reason that hitherto he had been undervalued, the unaccustomed consideration of all around him now tempted him to extravagances.

For the whole aspect of affairs in Paris and in France was altered. Momoro, the cautious printer of the Rue de la Harpe, was now no longer afraid to publish Camille's pamphlet, "La France Libre."

Momoro was a man indeed who moved with the times. From henceforth he styled himself the "First Printer of the National Liberty." Later, he was to become one of the most violent supporters of the Terror, an extremist whom at last the Terrorist



Government itself threw into prison for preaching the "agrarian" law of ultra-socialism when sent on a mission into the provinces.

On July 15th, the very day after the taking of the Bastille, "La France Libre" was published. The pamphlet met with instantaneous success. This "song of the Gallic lark," as it has been called by M. Louis Combés, voiced the thoughts which many were now formulating in their minds, although as yet they dared scarcely express them in words.

On the title-page Camille inscribes himself as "M. Camille Desmoulins, Avocat au Parlement de Paris, Electeur du Bailliage de Vermandois."

A motto or epigraph follows, according to the custom of the time, and, according to Camille's own custom, the quotation is taken from the classics. He uses Cicero's phrase: "Quæ quoniam in foveam incidit, obruatur," translating it with characteristic freedom in the words: "Puisque la bête est dans le piège, qu'on l'assomme."

Camille strikes a note of daring at the very beginning of the pamphlet by stating boldly that:—

"There have always been in France patriots who have sighed for liberty. The return of that liberty to the French people was reserved for our days. . . . I thank Thee, O Heaven, for permitting me to be born at the end of this century."

Then follows a violent tirade against the clergy and the nobility—"the Aristocrats, the Vampires of the State"—who have crushed out liberty. After describing the oppression, the almost slavery which the people of France have suffered for so long, Camille, with an abrupt transition which is at once extraordinarily clever and extraordinarily cynical, holds up before the sovereign People another and still more tangible inducement to rebellion.

"For myself I feel courage enough to die for the liberty of my country, and a very powerful motive will draw those

whom the righteousness of this cause is not sufficient to determine.

"Never was richer spoil offered to the victors. Forty thousand palaces, hotels, castles, two-fifths of the riches of France to be distributed amongst them, will be the prize of valour."

Camille discourses at length on this subject and then makes another dramatic change of front.

"But we will turn our eyes from these horrors," he says feelingly. "And may Heaven deign to withdraw them from above our heads! No, without doubt, that which we dread will never take place. I only wish to frighten the aristocrats by showing them their inevitable extinction if they resist longer the call of reason, the wish and supplication of the people.

"These gentlemen will be in no hurry to expose themselves to lose the riches which it is easy for them to preserve, and of which assuredly we have no wish to despoil them."

This whole preamble reminds one irresistibly of Mark Antony's famous speech, where Shakespeare pictures him stirring up the worst passions of the Roman mob, whilst affecting only to assuage their anger.

The two next sections treat of the moot questions of the deliberation by head or by order in the States-General, and of that other burning theme of the day: "What is a Constitution?"

Camille's arguments touching these points are simple enough and those which were most likely to appeal to the popular spirit of the time. He avers that every usage, such as the vote by order, must have been originally ratified by the people. Therefore, this same people who have decreed may also annul and make the vote by head obligatory:—

"The present will derogates the will of the past. The generation which is no more must cede its powers to us who live, or, otherwise, let the dead rise from their tombs and come to maintain their old usages against us."

In the second section there is a curiously anti-socialistic paragraph, one of those strange contradictions which are so common in the Republican writings of that day, and which prove how very rarely it was that the men of the Revolution wished to carry into practice their theories of absolute equality.

After making use of the decidedly weak argument that because the majority of the people have never yet passed an agrarian law, it is certain, therefore, that they never will, Camille goes on to say:—

“Legislators have deleted from the body politic the class of people whom they called at Rome proletariats, as being useful only to breed children and to recruit society; they have relegated them to a division without influence over the assemblies of the people. Withdrawn from political affairs by a thousand cares, this division can never become dominant in the State.

“The very consequences of their condition bar them from the assemblies. Can the servant give his opinion with the master, and the beggar with those upon whose alms he subsists?”

So much for Camille's views of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity when he was discussing the question of putting the theory into practical use.

The third section is perhaps the most famous portion of the pamphlet. It treats of the clergy, and begins with the words: “C'est la clergie qui a fait le clergé,” which means, literally, “It is clericalism which has made the clergy.”

Camille then proceeds to argue rather appositely that, if it is not as clerics or clerks that churchmen take the first place in the community, surely it cannot be as ministers of that religion which commands that its priests should take the lowest and not the highest seat.

There follows a bitter and sweeping tirade against the priesthood, which is succeeded by a passage containing a fairly clear and succinct exposition of Camille's views on the subject of religion.

“Atheism is treated as a species of delirium, and with reason. Yes, there is a God, we see it plainly as we cast our



eyes around the universe ; but we see it like those unfortunate children who, having been exposed and deserted by their parents, perceive that they have a father ; the course of nature ordains that they must have had one ; but it is in vain that they call upon this father ; he does not reveal himself.

“ It is fruitlessly that I seek to find what cult pleases him most ; he does not manifest himself by any sign, and his thunderbolt strikes alike our churches and the mosques of others.

“ It is not God who has need of religion, it is mankind. God does not require incense, processions and prayers, but we have need of hope, of consolation, and of one who will reward us. In the face of this indifference which he manifests towards all cults, can we not give ourselves a national religion ? ”

The passage follows which has been already quoted in a previous chapter, where Camille pleads the cause of a gayer religion, a religion like that of the Greeks and Romans. Pagan as he was by nature, he rebelled against the cult of Christianity, which promised him no recompense in this world save poverty and sorrow.

He remarks, with some show of reason, it must be confessed, that the worst kings of France were always the most outwardly scrupulous in religious observances, and finally concludes that : “ We must be given a courageous religion, beneficial to the State, if its ministers wish still to belong to the first order.”

In the fourth section, which treats of the nobility, Camille inveighs bitterly against the arbitrary barriers of rank and caste.

He calls upon his fellow-citizens to annihilate these absurd and onerous distinctions. He ends by assuring the nobles themselves that, if they willingly resign their rights, with a good grace, the people will reciprocate by restoring those rights to them again, which strikes one as neither logical nor consistent after the diatribe which has gone before.

Camille afterwards proceeds to give a concentrated history of all the kings of France from Philippe le Bel downwards. This portion of the pamphlet is frankly

copied, in scheme at least, from one of the works of Mirabeau, "Lettres de Cachet." Camille's comments certainly do not err on the side of flattery; indeed, in many instances his remarks are grossly and wilfully exaggerated. According to him, the whole line of French kings were forgers, coiners, murderers and worse, and, contrary to expectation, he becomes no milder in his statements as he approaches nearer to his own times.

It is possible for us now, after the lapse of almost two centuries, to see what a large proportion of truth there is in Camille's estimate of the characters and reigns of Louis XIV and his immediate successors, the Regent Orléans and Louis XV. At the time when he wrote it certainly required courage to describe in this fashion the reigning monarch's own forbears.

In concluding this section Camille uses his new-found weapon of bitter raillery.

"Such was the reign of Louis the Well-Beloved; but he was not wicked. And what more could he have done, cried Mirabeau, if he had been? Tarquin, nevertheless, cried Cicero, was not wicked. He was not cruel, he was only proud, and our fathers have expelled him; but these were Romans. And we . . . pardon, dear fellow-citizens, when I attended the National Assembly I said: We are worth more than the Romans, and Cyneas has seen nothing equal to this in the Senate."

In reading such words as these one does not wonder that Momoro hesitated to publish this pamphlet. As Camille himself naïvely remarks: "Je m'attends aux clameurs que ce paragraphe va exciter."

But if he is outspoken here, in the last section the bold writer is even bolder. He there discusses: "What Constitution is the best for France?"

Camille argues with plenty of skill that it is the kingly state which corrupts even the best of men, not the man who, by his faults, lowers the kingly state. If absolute power is placed in the hands of any one man, it invites him to become a tyrant.

Camille avows his own Republican views in an extraordinarily open manner when one considers that, as Aulard says in speaking of this exact period: "I have searched thoroughly and I have found only one Frenchman who, at this time, called himself a Republican; it was Camille Desmoulins. In his '*France Libre*,' written at the end of June, 1789, and placed on sale on the July 17th following, he declares his preference for a Republic before a Monarchy."

Notwithstanding this, Camille does not yet avowedly wish to throw the King overboard. He would still accept a limited—a very limited—monarchy. Except in that he has not fulfilled his promises to the people, Camille has no quarrel with the King as an individual. In speaking of him, indeed, he uses the old argument of Brutus: "I love Louis XVI personally, but the monarchy is none the less odious to me."

Finally, Camille paints a word picture of the millennium to come, when the National Assembly shall have completed the work which it has so nobly begun. In what are by far the finest passages of the whole pamphlet Camille acclaims the time when there will be liberty of commerce, liberty of conscience, liberty to write, liberty to speak; a national army, a national treasury, and then, carried away by enthusiasm, he cries: "Why should we wish to be Brétons, Béarnais, Flemings? Could there be under heaven a finer name than that of Frenchman? To that famous name all ought to sacrifice their own!"

Camille brings the whole work to a conclusion with one of those classical parallels of which he was always so fond:—

"Following the example of that Lacedemonian, Otríades, who, alone, and wounded to death upon the field of battle, raised a trophy with his trembling hands and wrote in his blood: '*Sparta has vanquished*,' I feel that I could die joyfully for such a splendid cause, and, pierced with wounds, I also would write in my blood: '*France is free*!'"



This pamphlet is a very characteristic example of Camille's early work. From a literary point of view, it is exceedingly interesting. The style is clear, easy and unforced; the choice of words is just; the writer seems to gain his effects without effort. Everywhere may be found that distinction and felicity of phrase which causes Camille's writings to stand out in such vivid relief against those of his fellow-journalists of the Revolutionary period. Indeed, to receive full justice the "France Libre" must be read in its original language.

As to the boldness of expression, that is the more remarkable when we remember that, at this time, no more servile press could have been found than that of France. This reckless disregard of consequences, this literary outspokenness was always one of Camille's most marked characteristics. It was at once the curse and the honour of his life and work. In the beginning it brought him fame; later, it was to draw down upon him the bitter hatred of the Royalists and Moderates. Yet later still, he was to be overwhelmed with self-reproach when he saw the consequences of some of those written words of his, and in the end it was his rash and generous frankness which led him to death.

"La France Libre," as we have said, was enormously successful. It firmly established Camille's name as a writer. Nevertheless, from a pecuniary point of view the publication was not satisfactory. The author received only thirty louis for the pamphlet, and but twelve louis for his next work, the "Discours de la Lanterne," which was probably published at about the middle or end of August. The only date given on the title-page is that of "L'an I<sup>er</sup> de la Liberté."

In this "Discours de la Lanterne aux Parisiens" we find Camille at his best and worst. It is not a studied and reasoned piece of work like its predecessor, written in the full knowledge that publication meant probable imprisonment or even worse. Now that the

Bastille had fallen and the first year of liberty had dawned, Camille could say what he pleased. He was the spoilt favourite of the mob, and it is the mob whom he addresses.

The "Lanterne" made a direct appeal to the populace, and it is an appeal which is unworthy of its author. He played to the gallery when he called himself "Procureur-Général de la Lanterne," using that title which was afterwards to be so often cast in his teeth.

It is in order to attract attention, to make a laugh, as it were, that Camille writes in the person of that ill-famed "lamp-iron" in the Place de Grève, at the corner of the Rue de la Vannerie, where so many impromptu executions had taken place, including that of the wretched Foulon.

Not that the whole pamphlet bears the imprint of bloodthirstiness. Cruel as it is, this work of Camille's has a worse reputation than it deserves—chiefly amongst those who have never read one word of it.

The "Discours" bears as an epigraph the famous passage of St. John's Gospel: "Qui malé agit odit lucem," Camille's free and irreverent translation of which runs: "Rogues object to the lamp-post."

The author opens the pamphlet in that lightly jesting spirit which was afterwards to render him so famous.

"Brave Parisians," he writes, in the person of the lamp-post, "what thanks do I not owe to you? You have rendered me for ever celebrated and blessed amongst lanterns. What are the lanterns of Sosia and of Diogenes in comparison with me? He sought for one man, and I have found two hundred thousand. . . . Yes, I am the queen of lanterns. Citizens, I wish to render myself worthy of the honour which you have done me by your choice."

Camille then goes on to eulogise at great length that famous night of August 4th, when the nobility voluntarily and on the impulse of the moment gave

up their feudal rights: "It is this night which has reinstated the French people in the rights of man, which has declared all citizens equal."

In this passage and in many of the pages which follow there is no sign of cruelty or vindictiveness. Certainly Camille complains later that certain proved conspirators against the sovereign people have been allowed to slip from the hands of the law, but he adds:—

"Not that I love too hasty justice; you know that I gave evidences of discontent during the execution of Foulon and Berthier; I broke the fatal cord twice in succession. I was perfectly convinced of the treason and of the faults of these two rascals; but the executioner put too much precipitation into the affair. I would have liked an interrogatory and the revelation subsequently of a number of facts."

Yet, in spite of this, he continues throughout the pamphlet to play with the idea of murder, treating it as a thing of little account, palliating and excusing deeds of violence, even while not openly advocating them.

Even in these early days Camille makes the famous accusation which he and others were so often to repeat later, the accusation that the counter-revolutionary party were endeavouring to disgust the populace with their own work by encouraging licence and extreme measures.

Here is the germ of that idea which afterwards led to Camille's violent diatribes against the "Hébertists" and "Ultras." He warns the people against this attempt, and especially against the books published with that aim in view.

Yet after abusing one de Tellier for writing a pamphlet of this description Camille with generous inconsistency protests with all his might against the fact that this journalist has been sent to the Abbaye for his opinions, and demands, in his own unrivalled manner, the instant liberation of the "poor devil of an author."



This is followed by an enthusiastic address to Mirabeau, whom Camille was just beginning to look upon as his most powerful friend: afterwards, by a rather abrupt transition, he breaks into an impassioned defence of the Palais Royal, which he speaks of as the "Forum of Paris."

The rest of the pamphlet is mainly taken up with one of Camille's usual denunciations of a dominant cult in religion. A national, universal, unsectarian religion is the only one that he will recognise—such a religion as was put to the test by the Conventional Government after Camille's death, only to fail most ignominiously. Indeed the attempt was so hopelessly unsuccessful that men were fain to legislate for the return of Catholicism.

But this was in the future; in the meantime, Camille declaims against dogmatism at great length, supporting his remarks on a state religion by a phrase which has become somewhat famous.

"Anyone in the world," he says, "would turn heretic, schismatic, or even Jew, if it were necessary, to avoid paying anything."

If I have seemed to defend the "Discours de la Lanterne" against the charges of bloodthirstiness which are so freely brought against it, it is not from any wish to palliate the dangerous tendencies of this pamphlet.

Still, without in any way excusing Camille, it is necessary to do justice to what is in many ways a very brilliant piece of work.

There are fine passages in the "Discours," passages which manifest nothing but patriotism and a real desire for the well-being of France. Camille forgets his audience, as it were, when he is describing his ideal Republic, in which there shall be no sorrow nor bloodshed, where all shall dwell together in happiness and love.

Then he remembers that he is addressing a mob

whose present sport is bloodshed and who require to be humoured; he promptly pulls himself up and reverts to the playful cruelty of the opening paragraphs.

Throughout the whole pamphlet Camille's scholarship and erudition are always manifest, if never ostentatiously displayed. Perhaps no writer of that time could make use of classical quotations and allusions with more skill or with less appearance of pedantry.

In spite of everything which could and can be advanced in its favour, it is very evident that Camille himself was ashamed of this work of his. One cannot read his letters at this time without seeing that he took little or no pride in the "Discours." It was published anonymously, and it was not until the pamphlet proved an unexpected success that Camille acknowledged its authorship, although one cannot help fancying that the style must have been unmistakable to any intelligent critic.

Writing to his father at the end of September, the young man says:—

"The work of the 'Lanterne' is not worth anything like as much as the other, and it would have caused me to decline in public opinion if I had put my name to it. However, I have heard many nice things said about it, and, unless my publisher wilfully deceives me, no one has spoken badly of it to him."

In a second letter, two days later, he refers to the pamphlet again:—

"My 'Discours de la Lanterne' is selling well, and the edition is almost exhausted. It is the only brochure which is being purchased in these days, but everyone is so tired of all these pamphlets that I hesitate to allow a second edition to be struck off."

It is really something of a relief to find that Camille could take no honest satisfaction in this particular piece of work.

Mr. J. H. McCarthy, in his brilliant history of the French Revolution, has given us his estimate of the "Discours," an estimate which, if it errs slightly perhaps on the side of severity, is nevertheless just enough in the main.

"It was a very brilliant pamphlet," he says, "and it had a great success. It is not pleasant reading now, after the interval of more than a century, but it is easy to understand how it affected and attracted the unstable, the agitated minds of 1789. . . . It shows us a Camille whose epigrams are scrawled in blood, who finds an amused delight in cruelty like a gamin. . . . He came in the fullness of time to regret its utterances bitterly. . . . It is a horrible piece of work, and its influence was incalculably evil, but with all its horror it charms by its genius, by its dazzling insolence, by the wit which wings the most venomous shafts of a murderous personality."

It is true that the very gaiety, eloquence and charm of Camille's style were perilous. To him, hanging is a jest, murder a very fine art; at least, so it must have appeared to his readers.

It was indeed a never-ceasing surprise to Camille that his writings were taken so seriously, although he would have disclaimed such a sentiment indignantly. It was not that he did not mean what he wrote: he was thoroughly in earnest—at the time.

Then . . . the wind changed, and Camille's opinions with it, but the works of his pen remained, a witness of what he had been, of what he was no longer.

Very bitterly was Camille to regret during the last months of his life that he "had written so much." Sometimes remorse came to him swiftly, as in the case of his "Brissot Unveiled." We shall see how in the midst of the trial and condemnation of the Girondists, the realisation came suddenly to the journalist that it was he who had killed these men, his former friends, by means of his book. And the bitterness of that realisation lay in this: that he had already come



almost to the point of abjuring the opinions which had led him to write the fatal pamphlet.

As to Camille's consistent and unvarying rancour against sectarian religion and its ministers, one must remember that this was a characteristic both of his time and of his nation. For his was an age which absolutely lacked religion; so much so, that the simple, unaffected piety of Louis XVI was considered something extraordinary, almost outside nature.

Camille did not go so far as many, nay, most, of his contemporaries; he was never, in word or deed, an atheist. As he wrote in later days: "I have always believed in the immortality of the soul."

But there is a strain of irreverence in his writings which may be met with in those of French authors of all ages. It is a strange and alien thing to us of other nations, who blaspheme, should we wish to do so, in more downright fashion.

Camille knew the Scriptures well; he quotes from them freely, and often appositely, but, as it were, with his tongue in his cheek, in a manner which jars on us. Again and again he uses and misuses texts to serve his purpose.

For instance, in that famous number of the "Vieux Cordelier," where he so vehemently denounced Hébert and his followers, he paraphrases the Gospel in this fashion, when he says, with terrible and bitter raillery, referring to Hébert's scurrilous journal: "Il y aura plus de joie dans le ciel pour un Père Duchesne qui se convertit, que pour quatre-vingt-dix-neuf Vieux Cordeliers qui n'ont pas de besoin de pénitence."

His famous answer to the interrogations before the Revolutionary Tribunal has been often quoted as the extreme of blasphemy. It is well known that when asked his age he replied: "I am thirty-three, the age of the Sansculotte Jesus; a critical age for every patriot."

It is quite certain, however, that in speaking thus Camille was not in the least degree deliberately irreverent.

Before that Tribunal men were either silent, or set themselves to make phrases. Danton had given Camille an example of the latter course, and it was, besides, natural to the journalist to speak on occasion, as we should say, for effect.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the term "Sansculotte" as applied to Christ was in no way originated by Camille at the moment. It was a phrase in common use at this time, as we learn from the contemporary writer Mercier in his "New Picture of Paris," published in 1800.

"Who would have guessed," he says, "that our Lord Jesus Christ would have been called the Sansculotte Jesus, that he would have no other surname in the Journals, in the Tribunals, at the Jacobins; and that this name was not given as a sarcasm, but as a true title of respect. A prodigious change then has taken place in the ideas of the people; the permission of saying everything created a peculiar kind of spirit, which, joined to a good portion of ignorance, was only more humorous."

The publication of these, his first important literary works, brings to a close the opening phase of Camille's life.

From his early youth up till this time, the wind which guided the young man's course had been settled in the north. Bitterly cold and biting it blew, clear and pitiless—a true wind of liberty—and the weathercock obeyed its touch.

It is such an influence as this which is evident in Camille's early work. All is clear and well-defined; there is nothing misty, nebulous, or indecisive in this writing. Even that sunny gaiety which is never quite absent from anything which Camille's hand has touched appears now sharp and frosty, like sparkling sunshine on snow.

Already there were signs that the wind was changing. Camille's cold winter of discontent was over, for a time. In a little while he was to feel the pleasant warmth of the sun of prosperity and, under the influence of the western wind of success and love, we shall see our weathercock veer and point to another quarter.



PART TWO  
THE WEST WIND

“The winds come lightly whispering from the West,  
Kissing, not ruffling, the blue deeps serene.”

*Byron.*

# I

**W**ITH the publication of his two famous pamphlets began the second period of Camille's life, and that which was in most respects the happiest.

Hitherto we have seen him gloomy, unsuccessful, unhappy. Now he had become suddenly famous, and it was not long before happiness followed on the heels of success.

His first publications, as we have seen, were extraordinarily well received, and they made for him a name. As he naïvely remarks in a letter to his father on September 20th: "On ne dit plus d'un auteur appelé Desmoulins, mais 'une brochure de Desmoulins.'"

Early in September a third production from Camille's pen appeared, "The Protest in favour of the Marquis de St.-Huruge." In this defence of the famous mob orator, who had recently been arrested and imprisoned in the Châtelet, the journalist made skilful use of his legal knowledge, although the pamphlet, like its subject, has lost much of its interest for us.

Camille's letters to his father at this time reflect his state of mind very clearly. They are so unconsciously self-revelatory, they display such ingenuous conceit. He is flattered and spoilt, and he knows it—he says so very frankly—but . . . he certainly has a very good opinion of himself. He is feverishly anxious for the appreciation of his father; above all, he longs to make an impression upon the sceptical Guisards, although he is careful to insist upon his absolute disregard for their opinions.



It is evident that M. Desmoulins, senior, had heard an exaggerated account of Camille's exploits. He believed that his scapegrace son had become more notorious than famous. It is plainly in answer to a reproving letter from his father that Camille writes as follows on September 20th:—

“The best response to your letter full of reproaches is to send you the three works. I have prepared an immense packet, and you will find in it four copies of ‘La France Libre,’ of the ‘Lanterne,’ and a number of copies of a little leaflet which has been infinitely praised, and upon which I am complimented everywhere (the ‘Defence of the Marquis de St.-Huruge’). In addition I send with this letter a number of the ‘Chronicle of Paris’: compare these written and printed estimates of writers whom I do not know, and whose praise I am not rich enough to pay for, with the insults of our Guisards, and with what you call public indignation.

“For the rest, when I send you the witness of the journals and when I tell you, as I did in my last letter, the infinitely flattering things that I have heard about ‘La France Libre,’ I do this on your account alone, in order that you may not blush for me, and not that you should excite the envy of our compatriots by repeating it all to them; I know that nobody is a prophet in his own country, and it is useless to try to open the eyes of those whom the light wounds.

“If you hear ill spoken of me, console yourself with the remembrance of the testimony of MM. Mirabeau, Target, de Robespierre and more than two hundred deputies. . . . Recollect that a great part of the capital names me amongst the principal authors of the Revolution. Many even go so far as to say that I am the sole author. . . . But the testimony which flatters me the most is that of my own conscience, it is the interior knowledge that what I have done is good. I have contributed to free my country, I have made myself a name. . . . Nothing can give me another moment so happy as that one when, upon July 12th, I was, I will not say applauded by ten thousand people, but stifled with embraces and tears. Perhaps then I saved Paris from entire ruin, and the nation from the most horrible servitude. . . . No, those who speak ill of me deceive you; they lie to themselves and at the bottom of their hearts they wish to have a son like me.”

The innocent vanity of this last paragraph is really delicious. Certainly Camille's head was turned with a vengeance.

For the first time in his life he was making an appearance in Parisian society. As he tells us, Mercier, the author of the "*Tableaux de Paris*," and others introduced him into good houses, and he could dine out whenever he wished. It was this fact which was at once his greatest delight and his greatest shame. Camille could be entertained, but he could not entertain.

His literary work was enormously successful, but it was very far as yet from being profitable. He had sold his two first pamphlets outright for a ridiculously small sum, and his finances were in an extremely critical state. Nevertheless, Camille had come to the conclusion, naturally enough, that his present squalid lodgings were not suitable for a man of his improved position. He wanted to furnish rooms of his own, where he could receive his friends, and accordingly he arranged to take a suite in the Hôtel de Nivernais.

But inconsequent Camille had not reckoned upon the cost of furniture and of housekeeping on his own account. As he ruefully writes to his father on September 22nd, the expenses have absorbed all that he made by his last pamphlet. In short, he asks M. Desmoulins tentatively to send him five or six louis.

His father did not rise to the occasion. Possibly he rather distrusted Camille's own account of his sudden rise in the world, knowing this son of his of old. However that may be, he seems to have taken no notice of Camille's request, for on September 29th we find the young man writing to enquire anxiously whether his father has received his last letter. Apparently M. Desmoulins' only response was highly unsatisfactory, for on October 8th, the "chief author of the Revolution" wrote again in a most piteous strain.

With a certain show of reason Camille insists upon the vital importance to him of a settled address, if he is to take the part which is his due in municipal politics.

"With a domicile I should have been president, commandant of a district, representative of the Commune of Paris," he complains. "Instead of which, I am only a distinguished writer. . . .

"But this is the astonishing part of it all ! For ten years past I have complained in these terms, and in the end it has been easier for me to make a Revolution, to upset France, than to obtain from my father a paltry fifteen louis, and a helping hand to enable me to set up an establishment. What a man you are ! With all your wit and all your virtues, you have never been able to understand me. You have constantly calumniated me, you have eternally called me a prodigal, a spendthrift, and nothing could be more untrue. . . .

"Aid me in these circumstances and send me a bed, if you cannot permit me to buy one here. Can you refuse me a bed ? . . . I have a reputation in Paris, they consult me upon great affairs ; they invite me to dinner ; there is no pamphleteer whose works sell so well. I only lack a domicile ; I beseech you to help me, send me six louis, or at least a bed ! "

Camille explains that his ready money has been exhausted in paying his debts. "I am almost without creditors, but also without money ! "

Probably M. Desmoulins took these reproaches at their right valuation, and made allowances like the wise man that he was. It seems that Camille's letter led to no quarrel and obtained for him the help which he needed. A few months later we shall find the young man writing to his home in very different spirits.

It was during these summer months, immediately after the fall of the Bastille, that the friendship began between Camille Desmoulins and Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau. This friendship was a very real thing on both sides, although it was spoilt and finally broken off by quarrels and misunderstandings.



It would appear that Camille first brought himself to the notice of the great Revolutionary Tribune as early as the spring of 1789, by asking for a post on the staff of the paper which Mirabeau edited.

This journal was designed to describe the proceedings of the States-General in detail, but it only appeared for a short time at the beginning of May under its original title of "*Journal des Etats-Généraux.*" The paper was unauthorised, and Mirabeau was not in good repute with the Government; moreover, he attacked Necker in one of the early issues, and for this reason among others further publication of the journal was forbidden by an order of the Council.

Mirabeau, however, eluded this decree by continuing to publish the paper under the title of "*Lettres de Mirabeau à ses Commettants,*" and it was circulated very freely in Paris and the Provinces. After the fall of the Bastille and the subsequent enfranchisement of the Press the name of the journal was altered to that of "*Courier de Provence.*"

Although there is no evidence that Camille ever contributed personally to Mirabeau's paper, it is probable that the great man foresaw that the journalist might be useful to him in the future. No one ever formed more rapid or more just opinions of the men about him than Mirabeau, and there is no doubt that he perceived the spark of genius in the impecunious little lawyer—perceived too that it might be utilised to serve Count Mirabeau and, through him, France.

He made much of Camille, he invited him to his house, gave him such dinners as the young fellow had never probably conceived as possible, showed him life in more senses of the word than one.

Camille was absolutely dazzled, and small wonder. Mirabeau was rapidly becoming the most prominent man of his day, and he was as great in fascination as in all else. Where he cared sufficiently to exert his

power—and there is little doubt that he cared for Camille—he could be irresistible.

And Camille, to use his own forcible words, loved Mirabeau “comme une maîtresse.” We cannot do better than quote from one of his letters to Brissot, written after the death of Mirabeau:—

“Mirabeau made me live with him under the same roof at Versailles,” he says. “He flattered me by his esteem, he touched me by his friendship, he mastered me by his genius and his great qualities. I loved him to idolatry.”

At first Camille thought of Mirabeau only as a mighty patron, able, if he was pleased to do so, to give him employment as a journalist.

On September 29th, however, we find the young man writing to his father in high triumph, to tell him that the great man now treats him as a familiar friend:—

“For eight days past I have been staying at Versailles with Mirabeau. Every instant he takes my hand, he pats me on the back. . . . I feel that his table, too delicate and too overloaded, will corrupt me. His burgundies and his maraschino have an attraction which I seek vainly to hide from myself, and I have all the difficulty in the world to regain my republican austerity and to detest the aristocrats whose crime it is to enjoy these excellent dinners. I prepare motions for Mirabeau, and he calls this initiating me into great affairs.”

It is very plain from this last remark that Mirabeau was making use of Camille, as he made use of everybody for one purpose or another. However, it would appear that on this occasion the young man outstayed his welcome, for we find him writing on October 8th:—

“I have passed two charming weeks with Mirabeau; but, seeing that I was no longer useful to him, I bade him farewell, and I have returned to Paris. We have parted to meet again, and we are good friends; he has invited me to come and spend eight days with him whenever I like. During my sojourn at Versailles, he asked me to compose a memoir of the town of Belesme against its sub-delegate and intendant. I have done it.”

It was thus that the friendship began which was to end sadly, at no very distant date, amidst clouds of doubt and dissension.

In the meantime the Revolution was not going forward as fast as the people had confidently hoped and expected. The retrograde Court party was still very strong, although much weakened by the incessant out-going tide of emigration. As for the National Assembly, its work was more or less at a standstill, and it had not yet given France the promised Constitution. Its very composition militated against any combined or united effort. Truer words were never spoken than those of Mirabeau with reference to the States-General.

“More than five hundred Frenchmen,” he said, “gathered from all parts of the Kingdom, without a leader, without organisation, all free, all equal; none with any authority, none feeling himself under any obligation to obey, and all, like Frenchmen, wishing to be heard before they would listen.”

At last, on October 5th, maddened by famine and by the open insults of the Court, the people took matters into their own hands. Everyone knows the story of how a great concourse of men and women executed the famous march to Versailles on that wet autumn day, how they camped round the Palace, a gaunt menacing throng, how, in the early dawn of the following morning, they broke into the house of their King, and would have assassinated the Queen but for the self-devotion of a mere handful of Royal guards.

The market women of Paris, the men of the slum fauxbourgs, gained their point. They brought back the Royal family to the capital by main force, and obliged them to take up their abode in the dilapidated palace of the Tuileries, practically prisoners, so far as free will over their own movements was concerned.

Camille hailed this event as a fresh victory of the populace—as a crowning victory. Writing on October



5th, he says: "You have heard no doubt of the great Revolution which has been effected: Consummatum est."

It was at about this time that Camille began to contemplate the possibility of publishing a journal of his own. There was a fashion at that time for personal news-sheets, usually produced weekly, of which the entire contents, or at least the bulk of them, were written by one man alone.

This form of journalism was born of the Revolution, and the newly attained freedom of the Press. It was a method of airing their views which appealed irresistibly to the young writers of both parties, and it had an especial fascination for Camille.

Probably he had no difficulty in finding a printer willing to publish this new venture of his. Camille was already well known as a writer; more than that, he was popular.

But whether the paper, when once started, would be successful or not, was the question which must have tormented Camille day and night before that first number of his journal was published on November 28th, 1789.

The new publication was entitled the "*Révolutions de France et de Brabant*," and it appeared weekly in the form of a little octavo pamphlet in a grey paper cover. An extract from the prospectus which was distributed beforehand will give some idea of the scope of the paper and also of the spirit in which Camille published it:—

"This journal will appear every Saturday," it runs. "Each number will be divided into three sections: 1st Section. France. 2nd Section. Brabant, and the other kingdoms which, adopting the cockade and demanding a national assembly, merit a place in this journal. 3rd Section. In order to draw back, as far as possible, the frontiers of our censorial empire, under the title of varieties this paragraph will embrace all which can interest my dear fellow citizens and amuse them

this winter in their chimney corners. I await the maledictions of the aristocrats ; I see them, extended idly on their couches, spring up in fury and seize the tongs : ‘ Vile author, if thou wert here !—— ’ But I remember what my dear Cicero said : ‘ Subeundae sunt bonis inimicitiae ; subeantur.’

“ We have neglected nothing in order to obtain fresh and reliable news, and hold out to our subscribers the promise of our epigraph : *Quid Novi ?* The price of our publication is 10 livres 15 sols for Paris, and 7 livres 10 sols for the provinces, for three months, carriage paid all over the kingdom.”

The paper was illustrated by Garney, the publisher, with a weekly caricature. These same engravings, by the way, were often a cause of great offence to Camille, for one reason or another.

Charles de Monseignat, in his “ *Histoire des Journaux du France*,” inveighs most bitterly against these pictures, as infamous productions, and evidently considers that the journalist was responsible for them. This was very far from being the case. The caricatures were entirely provided by the publisher, much against Camille’s wishes, and the editor evidently did not always even see them before publication. He very often most vehemently and outspokenly disapproved of them.

In the seventeenth number of the paper he states expressly that the illustrations were not his affair.

“ I protest,” he says, “ against the woodcut at the head of my last number. I have already stated that I do not meddle with the frontispiece and the figures, except in three or four instances when I gave the idea.”

All those doubts and fears which Camille must have felt respecting the reception of his journal were soon dispelled. The paper was instantaneously successful ; from henceforth the Revolution found a new voice.

On December 4th Camille writes exultantly to his father :—

“ I forwarded the first number of my journal to you ; have you not received it ? Please let me know whether it has

arrived. I send you two prospectuses. If it is possible to do so, because nobody is a prophet in his own country, obtain some subscribers for me. Behold me a journalist and determined to use to the full the liberty of the Press. My first number is considered to be perfect ; but shall I be able to keep it up to this standard ? I am so busy that I write this to you at two o'clock in the morning."

Camille need not have doubted the continued success of his venture.

On December 31st he was able to write again, after several numbers had appeared :—

"Fortune herself grows tired of pursuing me. Judge of the success of my journal. I have in the town of Marseilles alone one hundred subscribers, in Dunkirk, one hundred and forty. If I had foreseen such a sale I would not have agreed to dispose of the paper to my publisher for two thousand crowns a year ; it is true that he has promised me four thousand when I shall have arrived at three thousand subscribers (what Jews these publishers are !).

"Nevertheless, it is not money that I have looked for in this enterprise, but the defence of my principles. What letters ! What flattering truths I receive ! . . . I am become indifferent to these eulogies, and as I appeared vain when people were pleased to humiliate me, so I despise to-day the flattering things which they address to me. That which touches me far more, or rather, that which is the only thing which touches me, is the friendship of patriots and the embraces of those republicans who come to see me, and some of them from very far away."

One must not infer from this that Camille's paper was ever popular in the same sense as "*L'Ami du Peuple*" or "*Le Père Duchesne*."

His style did not appeal to the lower classes to the same extent as did the solemn invectives of Marat and the blasphemous obscenities of Hébert. It was like offering an agricultural labourer expensive champagne ; he would infinitely prefer stout or ginger-beer.

Nevertheless there were many who could appreciate that fine writing and ready wit of Camille's ; many who recognised him, even then, as one of the few



great journalists who had sprung up amidst the throng of mediocre writers. The feeling which one experiences in reading Camille's journal has never been better expressed than by Carlyle.

"If in that thick murk of journalism," he writes, "with its dull blustering, with its fixed or loose fury, any ray of genius greets thee, be sure it is Camille's. The thing that Camille touches he with his light finger adorns; brightness plays gentle, unsuspected, amid horrible confusions; often is the word of Camille's worth reading where no other's is."

Certainly from the very first Camille respected nobody in the pages of his journal. He attacked the Royalist party with the keen rapier of his wit, finding their weak points unmercifully, evading with a light laugh the heavy bludgeons with which they tried to crush him.

Laughter was ever Camille's most deadly weapon—as Mirabeau—Tonneau, the Royalist brother of the great Tribune, and many others learnt to their cost. Not that it was only the members of the monarchical party whom he attacked. It was no idle boast which he made later in Number 69 of the "*Révolutions de France et de Brabant*."

"I am neither for Lameth, nor for Barnave, nor for the Jacobins, I am for the country. . . . I have ready for Mirabeau sometimes the trumpet, sometimes the whip."

Necker, for whose sake he had called the people to arms on July 12th, soon fell under the journalist's displeasure, and the "*Genevan hypocrite*" is the mildest term which he applies to him.

The fact was that Camille prided himself on saying exactly what he thought in his journal without fear of the consequences. He never paused to consider that what he thought to-day he might not think to-morrow—that, in the meantime, it was possible for the wind to change.

It was this thoughtlessness which led him into so

many terrible mistakes, mistakes which afterwards he would have given his very life to retrieve, which he did give his life in trying to retrieve.

Especially at this early period of his literary career Camille was essentially, to use the words of Charles de Monseignat, the "gamin de Paris du journalisme," laughing at everything, bad or good, contemptible or worthy of respect.

Under slightly different phraseology the modern historian Lenotre uses precisely the same simile when, speaking of Camille, he says :—

"In that mighty movement which upheaved France, Camille is not to be classed with the thinkers ; he played the part of a Gavroche, but, like Gavroche, he instinctively knew what pleased Parisians ; a genius for theatrical effect, playful audacity, and that bitterly satirical eloquence which carries away the crowd."

That most painstaking biographer, Jules Claretie, expresses the exact scope of Camille's talent very truly.

"He sharpens the edge of his wit," he writes, "until it cuts like a steel blade, wrought by an artist's hand, delicate as jeweller's work, but which pierces the heart of an enemy only the more quickly for that."

Finally the great German historian, von Sybel, has given us his estimate of the young man with Teutonic force and strength of language.

"The most gifted of these journalists," he says, speaking of the generation of writers who sprang up at the outbreak of the French Revolution, "was, indisputably, Camille Desmoulins, in whose easy causerie patriotism and licentiousness, love of freedom and venomous scorn, grace and cruelty were continually mingled. His writings were like flowers upon a dung-hill and his life like a many-coloured but scorching and quickly extinguished firework."

Yet it must not be imagined that Camille did not take the power of the Press seriously. In No. 17 of his

journal he shows that he knew what manner of edged tool it was with which he played.

“At the present day,” he says, “journalists exercise ministerial functions. They denounce, they decree, they rule in unforeseen matters, they absolve or condemn. Every day they ascend the orator’s tribune, and among them are stentorian voices which make themselves heard in the eighty-three departments. Places to hear these orators cost only two sous ; journals rain down every morning like the manna from heaven ; and fifty broadsheets enlighten the world each day, punctually as the sun.”

From November 28th, 1789, until the middle of July, 1791, the “*Révolutions de France et de Brabant*” appeared weekly, making in all eighty-six numbers. When considered as a whole they form a most remarkable piece of work, witty, cruel, humorous or tragic, turn by turn, but always brilliant and always fascinating.

Throughout the winter of 1789 and the spring and early summer of 1790 Camille edited and wrote the journal entirely alone. It meant hard and constant toil, but the work was congenial and, moreover, he soon found himself in rather more comfortable circumstances, although it would be a mistake to suppose that the paper ever brought him in much more than a bare livelihood.

It was not possible that Camille should continue weekly to abuse all and sundry without rousing a vast amount of antagonism against himself. In January, 1790, Sanson, the executioner of Paris, afterwards to become so infamously famous, brought an action against the journalist on the plea that he had called him in his journal a “bourreau,” and the Royalist periodicals assailed him constantly with his own weapons, although lacking their keen edge.

If Camille is sometimes fierce in his attacks, his language pales before that of his opponents, the anti-revolutionary journalists. These writers were proud



to consider themselves gentlemen, but nevertheless they descend too often to utter vulgarity in these coarse attacks upon their enemy. Their sole idea of humour often seems to lie in the invention of clumsy puns, such as that which styled Camille "l'anon des moulins," which strikes one nowadays as a somewhat schoolboyish class of wit.

At present Camille laughed at all these assaults. He could afford to do so, at least in his own opinion. He gives a very true picture of his normal, or abnormal state of mind at this time in a letter to his father.

"At one moment I think life a delicious thing," he says, "and the moment after, it seems almost insupportable, and this happens to me ten times a day."

The truth is, Camille was not yet completely happy. He was successful in his chosen profession, he was popular in a certain section of society, he was even moderately prosperous, in comparison, that is, with his former poverty, but all this did not seem to have brought him much nearer to the desire of his heart. Although he was now the avowed suitor of Lucile Duplessis, her father would not hear of the betrothal. Camille's sudden notoriety did not by any means increase his value in the eyes of worthy M. Duplessis. He wanted a safe, well-to-do husband for his lovely daughter, not an inflammatory firebrand of a journalist, who might be popular for the moment, but who, at the next swing of the pendulum, would, as likely as not, find himself in prison.

It would seem that Lucile had discovered that she loved Camille; there were clandestine meetings in the Luxembourg Gardens, meetings which the girl's mother connived at, if she did not actually arrange them. These stolen hours must have been some consolation to Camille for the apparent hopelessness of his suit; the two could not be completely miserable while they loved one another.

Probably it was during the winter of 1789-90 that Camille moved into rooms in the Rue de Théâtre Français. It was an important step in one respect, for it meant that he took up his residence in the district of the Cordeliers, the most progressive section of Paris, where Danton was the ruling spirit.

When the electoral Assemblies for the States-General had completed their work in Paris in the spring of 1789 they were not in all instances immediately dissolved. That of the Cordeliers continued to sit in the old convent of the Order from which it took its name, and was known as the Club or "Republic" of the Cordeliers.

This Club, which shares the fame of the Jacobins, was, in these early days, even more advanced in politics. Its sittings were almost as much frequented as those of the Jacobins, and the speeches of its orators were listened to nearly as eagerly.

Camille joined the club in February, 1790, and on the very day of his initiation we find him mentioned in connection with a curious little incident. He describes in his journal his feelings of pride and enthusiasm on finding himself a member of the famous club, and he tells how at the conclusion of the sitting it was announced that a young lady begged to be admitted to the hall. This was Théroigne de Méricourt, the famous courtesan, who appeared at the bar to propose that a Temple of the National Assembly should be erected on the site of the Bastille.

The enthusiasm with which the suggestion was received is curiously indicative of the spirit of the time. A committee, consisting of Danton, Camille, Fabre d'Eglantine and others, was appointed by the Club and entrusted with the task of drawing up an address to the French Nation, to invite patriots to subscribe to the foundation of this Temple of Liberty, of Humanity, and of Reason, to which all people should come to consult their oracle.

The address was drawn up on these lines, but it had little or no practical result. Impressionable Camille, however, waxes enthusiastic in his journal when speaking of the beauty of Mademoiselle Théroigne: "It is the Queen of Sheba," he exclaims, "come to visit the Solomon of the Districts."

It is in this same month of February that we find Camille at his cruellest in the pages of the "Révolutions," where he seeks to justify the execution of the Marquis de Favras. This Royalist, guilty, it would seem, of no definite crime save that of Royalism, was ignominiously hung as a scapegoat for the sins of the Court.

In a number full of classical references and impassioned apostrophes to the justice and mercy of the people, Camille protests vehemently that he will not listen to "accusations of barbarity against a people, who rejoice that human justice sometimes acts in the place of divine vengeance."

Later in the article the journalist even strives to discount the undeniable bravery with which de Favras met his death.

"The firmness with which he died," he says, "was that of a gladiator, who, being mortally wounded, strives to fall with decency and dignity."

On the fifth day of April, 1794, Camille was to learn for himself that it is not always so easy a thing to die with that decency and dignity of which he speaks so lightly.

In the spring of 1790 a cloud came over Camille's friendship with Mirabeau. The great orator did not bear patiently what he no doubt considered the young man's rather impertinent criticism of his conduct in the "Révolutions de France." It appears that he reproved Camille, and it is quite certain that the journalist took offence, for he never bore reproof in any form with equanimity.



It was apparently Mirabeau, too great a man to be unforgiving, from whom came the first overtures for peace ; we find him writing to the younger man on May 2nd.

"Well, poor Camille," he says, "has your head come right again ? We have sulked with you, but we forgive you."

And again a little later, in a second letter.

"Adieu, good boy, you deserve to be loved, notwithstanding your fiery flights."

In spite of these advances the coldness continued, and there was no real revival of the friendship between this time and the death of the great man a year later. If Mirabeau had but realised it, he did not set to work in the right way to mollify the thin-skinned journalist. "Poor Camille," "Good boy"—nothing could have been better calculated to irritate a man of Camille's peculiar temperament than these phrases. He hated to be laughed at ; he hated to be treated as young, and yet it was always his fate to be spoken of in this manner.

It was the same to the very end. Robespierre's half-slighting, half-jeering reference to him as a spoilt boy led to that rash outburst on Camille's part, which was greatly instrumental in bringing about his arrest and death.

Yet in justice Camille should have blamed his own personality and character and not these friends and enemies of his. He was indeed a boy who never grew up, the very Peter Pan of the Revolution. People could not take him seriously ; it is that which makes him at once so faulty and so lovable.

One little fact seems to sum up the character of the man. Everyone who knew him, friends and foes alike, almost without exception spoke of him as "Camille." There is no other man of that period of whom the same can be said. What meaning, for instance, would

it convey to most people if one talked of "Gabriel," "Georges," or "Jean-Paul," yet such were the Christian names of Mirabeau, Danton and Marat.

Robespierre, to be sure, is recognisable as "Maximilian," but his contemporaries generally coupled the name with a prefix, such as "St. Maximilian" or "King Maximilian."

It is impossible to deny that Marat, in his sardonic way, was a good judge of character. Hear what he says of, and to, Camille in the "Ami du Peuple" of August 10th of this year of 1790:—

"Notwithstanding all your cleverness, my dear Camille, you are a complete novice in politics. Perhaps that amiable gaiety which is the fundamental trait of your character and which shows itself in your treatment of the gravest subjects opposes itself to serious reflection, but you are vacillating in your judgments; you seem to have neither plan nor aim."

A very just estimate, this, of the self-named weathercock; but perhaps we cannot wonder that Camille did not love Marat.

A French poet, M. Emmanuel des Essarts, wrote some verses which were inserted by M. Jules Claretie in the appendix to his history of the Dantonists. No better description of Camille could be found than that which is contained in the last lines of this poem.

"Voilà le vrai Camille, une âme  
Enfantine et mobile, et folle : oiseau de flamme,  
Esprit de faune, et cœur de femme."

## II

**T**HE winter and spring of 1789-90 was marked by very few great political events.

On February 4th the people of Paris and of France hailed with their usual optimism the dawn of a new golden age, when King Louis, apparently on his own initiative, came to the Hall of the National Assembly to propose that the whole country, led by himself in person, should renew the National Oath, should swear to be faithful to the King, to the Law and to the forthcoming Constitution. The oath was accordingly taken throughout all the districts of Paris with enthusiasm and ceremonial; the whole city was illuminated, and the occasion was treated as a universal festival.

From the autumn of 1789 until the early summer of 1790 Camille, as we have seen, edited the "*Révolutions de France et de Brabant*" alone. The paper continued to be enormously successful, its circulation increased daily, and the pressure of work at last became too great even for the feverishly energetic journalist.

Accordingly early in July, 1790, Camille came to an arrangement with Stanislas Fréron by which the latter agreed to collaborate in the editorship of the journal.

The paper at this time was published by Laffrey, and the agreement is still extant in which Camille undertakes the post of editor for the sum of 10,000 livres annually, out of which he is to pay Fréron 3000 livres per annum, on condition that the latter contributes one-third of the contents of the journal.



Fréron was the son of the famous critic and reviewer of that name. He was something of a scholar and a capable journalist enough, although never a brilliant writer in the same sense as Camille. He was already editor-in-chief of the "Orateur du Peuple," a journal which was distinctly more violent in tone than that of Camille, and to which Marat was often a contributor. In fact, Fréron's whole style of writing reflects that of the author of the "Ami du Peuple," and Marat refers to the young man in his letters as his "dear lieutenant."

Fréron was a more deliberately pitiless, possibly a more consistent Revolutionary, than Camille. His writings are quite as inflammatory, but strike one as more cold-blooded, lacking as they do the charm and grace of style of those of his collaborator.

This "Lapin" Fréron, as he was called by his friends, was indeed a curious, contradictory character. His activities were by no means confined to journalism. Later he was to distinguish himself, and that not altogether enviably, as a deputy from the Convention on mission to Toulon. He was one of those who carried the Terror into the Southern provinces of France, and, in the name of Liberty, filled Toulon and Marseilles with smoking ruins and desolated homes.

History has written down Fréron as cruel and bloodthirsty; one of the mildest names applied to him is that of "singe-tigre"; yet his friends loved him. He was one of that little irresponsible band of intimates whom we shall see soon at Bourg-la-Reine, laughing and playing together through Camille's long honeymoon. He has left to us the most charming and touching portrait of Lucile Desmoulins which it is possible to imagine, in a letter to her husband, from which we shall have occasion to quote later.

That is the other side of Stanislas Fréron—the side with which history does not reckon.

Some of the best numbers of the "Révolutions de

France" were those which Camille wrote at about this time. In Nos. 34-36 he describes in vivid and picturesque language the Festival of the Federation in the Champ-de-Mars. This fête, held on July 14th, was in celebration of the first anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, and it was perhaps the only occasion on which the dreams of the ardent Revolutionists seemed really about to be realised in a kind of transport of universal brotherhood.

Paris and provincial France were to hold festival around the vast altar of the country in the Champ-de-Mars. Thousands of representatives assembled from all parts of the country. An army of workmen was busied in preparing the arena to seat this huge concourse, with its banked tiers of seats, but at the last moment it was found that even this army was insufficient for the labour in hand.

But the work must be done somehow—let the citizens of Paris complete it. A kind of frenzy of enthusiasm seized upon the people. High and low, rich and poor, all hastened to the Champ-de-Mars until the great plain looked like an anthill.

The work went forward merrily; the many hands did indeed make it light. In that lovely summer weather the toil was turned into a kind of picnic, an occasion for rejoicing and merriment. Deputies, nobles, fishwives and actresses all mingled together with priests and students from the Colleges. Youthful, ascetic Saint-Just jostled Madame du Barry with her wheelbarrow—or so Camille tells us; we may believe in that dramatic incident or not as we please.

One hundred and fifty thousand volunteers working together with hearts and hands; it was all very charming, very French, and immensely appealing to Camille, as we gather from his glowing description of this "stage ballet"—the "Reunion of the Orders," as he calls it.

After all the festival itself was something of an anti-

climax to the time of preparation. The weather was terribly bad on the great day, and it went near to spoiling the whole affair.

Camille tells us how numbers of people passed the night on the Champ-de-Mars, how numbers more hastened there at daybreak.

But the wind was icy cold and the rain fell in sheets ; it spoke well for the good humour of that vast crowd that their spirits were not entirely damped. The resplendent procession of King, Deputies, Churchmen and Nobles, with the eighty-three white banners of the Departments, the flags of the Districts, and the Oriflamme itself filed into the Champ-de-Mars in a downpour ; most of the ceremonies were gone through under pelting rain. But the people danced and laughed and sang, and when at about three o'clock the weather cleared, all discomforts were forgotten in spite of damp clothes and ruined decorations.

Probably Camille himself joined in the procession as one of the National volunteers who formed a guard of honour ; we know that many journalists were amongst them. Possibly he was one of those who received the brass medal representing the Bastille, worn on a tricolour ribbon as a military order, which was presented by the Municipality to all those who had assisted at the taking of the fortress.

Certainly he was present at the Festival ; certainly he has described it for his contemporaries and for us in the most glowing and enthusiastic language.

Yet he has one complaint to make, and that is of the King himself. He demands why "Capet the Elder" did not leave his throne in the Champ-de-Mars empty, to represent that the sovereignty rested with the people. In fact all through his numbers at this time Camille shows scant reverence for Louis, or for Royalty in general.

He tells us afterwards of the rejoicings and merry-makings in the Champs-Élysées and on the site of the



Bastille, transformed into a forest of "trees of liberty" surmounted by Phrygian caps.

Camille also mentions Danton in a curious and characteristic anecdote. The Cordeliers had held a banquet of their own in celebration of the Federation, and on this occasion Danton, already the leading spirit of this body, refused to drink any of the official toasts, save that to the health of the Fatherland.

It is in one of these numbers which describe the July festivals so joyfully that Camille first shows that he is beginning to feel doubts as to his own position. He had gone rather too far, rather too often. Malouet, over-powerful to be disregarded, was preparing to denounce the rash journalist in the National Assembly. In Number 34 of the "Révolutions" Camille expresses his misgivings.

"I begin to doubt whether I ought to sharpen so many daggers against myself, in order to enlighten ungrateful federals, who proposed at the Palais Royal, in my own hearing, that I should be hanged. I begin to doubt whether a journalist who has not been placed on guard by the people, but is a self-constituted sentinel, is obliged by his conscience to lead the wandering and underground life of M. Marat. It is all very well to jump into the gulf like Curtius when one believes that one's death will save one's country."

In a letter to his father at about this period Camille writes in much the same strain of the dangers which surrounded him and which, he says, menace him daily, but he ends on a more heroic note.

"Many men sell their lives to kings for five sous," he says. "Shall I then do nothing for the love of my country, of truth, of justice? I apply to myself that verse which Achilles says to a soldier in Homer: 'And Patrocles, he also is dead, who was worth more than I!'"

The list of disputes and lawsuits in which Camille involved himself at this time was endless. This was natural enough in the case of a journalist who wrote

openly that, in his opinion : " There is an excess of good sense and of wisdom which one ought to avoid."

His accusations of bribery and corruption against men in high places could not be suffered to pass unnoticed, and Crillon, Antoine Talon and Bergasse each in their turn demanded reparation from the overbold journalist. It must be confessed that they rarely obtained any particular satisfaction; at the worst Camille was condemned at the Châtelet by default, a sentence which did not trouble him over-much, we may imagine.

The Royalist journals also continued to attack him furiously, and with all the more spite and venom because their writers so seldom scored a hit against Camille, the agile and adroit.

It was on the last day of July that Victor Malouet, in an impassioned speech, denounced Camille before the National Assembly. He was listened to with attention, for Malouet was respected as an honest man and a good constitutional Royalist. He protested that the cruellest enemies of the Constitution were those who wrote and spoke with a view to making the King and Royalty itself an object of contempt and scandal, who seized on the occasion of a great festival, at which the King had received unanimous testimonies of love and loyalty, to speak of the insolence of the throne, of the slight to the people.

In support of his words, Malouet then read a passage from Camille's paper, where the journalist spoke of the triumph of Paulus Emilius as a National Festival, because a king, in deep humiliation, followed the triumphal car with bound hands.

" It is not," the orator protested, " that I wish to avenge a private injury. After a whole year of silence and contempt, I come here as the avenger of a public crime."

Notwithstanding Malouet's asseverations of disinterestedness, it is very plain, on reading the text of his " Complaint " against Camille addressed to the

Criminal Lieutenant of the Châtelet of Paris, that he had personal as well as public injuries to avenge.

We find it stated here that: "the life of the complainant has been in danger. Pursued at Versailles, insulted at the door of the Assembly, overwhelmed with anonymous letters, reduced to carry firearms with which to defend himself, the complainant attributes all this to Camille Desmoulins."

Malouet further adds that he judges from the violence of his writing, especially in No. 31 of the "Révolutions," that Camille is mad. He begs that the journalist may be seen and examined by the Physician to the Châtelet and taken to any madhouse which may be decided upon, as a violent and dangerous lunatic.

Malouet carried his point to the extent that the advocate to the Châtelet was instructed to prosecute such writings as Camille's, on the plea that it was treason against the nation on the part of authors, printers and hawkers to publish or aid to distribute anything which might be calculated to, in any way, incite the people to insurrection.

Two days afterwards, however, on August 2nd, an address in defence of Camille and written by himself was read in the Assembly. In this he complained that the treasonable number of his journal had not been publicly read by his accuser.

Camille was present, as he tells us, on this occasion, in his very best ruffled shirt, in order that he might make a good impression if he was forced to appear at the bar of the Assembly. When Malouet challenged the journalist to speak for himself, in his own defence, he did so, rather unexpectedly. But Camille was no more eloquent than usual on this occasion, and he was soon howled down.

It would probably have gone hardly with him, and he expected, as he says, that he would most certainly have been arrested had it not been for the intervention of "my dear Robespierre."



Camille himself describes his escape in light and jeering fashion, although there is little doubt that, at the time, he fully realised his danger, and did not look upon it as by any means a joke.

"It was half-past eleven," he says. "Mirabeau-Tonneau was tormented with the wish to moisten his dry gullet, and I was indebted for the silence which Camus obtained less to the president's bell than to the official bell which called the aristocrats and the ministerialists to supper. They at once abandoned the field of battle; I was led out in triumph; and scarcely had I tasted a little repose before a chorus of patriotic news-vendors came to arouse me with the sound of my own name, and cried under my windows: 'Great Confusion of Malouet! Great Victory of Camille Desmoulins!'"

As a matter of fact the result of the whole affair was that, on Pétion's motion supported by Alexandre de Lameth, the Assembly decreed that there should be no prosecution for anything published up to that time. The only work excepted from this amnesty was Marat's pamphlet, "C'en est fait de nous."

It is said that a National Guard, on hearing of Camille's acquittal, proclaimed that if he met the journalist he would cut open his head with his sword. Camille's comment is characteristic. "That man," he remarks in his journal, "evidently does not like a joke."

Camille certainly was lucky in escaping with a whole skin on this and other occasions.

He received, in common with most of the other leading Revolutionaries, constant challenges from the fiery little band of Royalists, whom their opponents styled "assassinateurs" or "spadassinicides."

These men, fine swordsmen all, associated themselves together with the avowed aim of provoking duels with the popular leaders, and by this means, if possible, abruptly terminating their careers. These Royalist champions were, as a rule, noblemen, accustomed since boyhood to the use of the sword. The men whom they tried to drive by insults and open

challenges to fight, were commonly, like Camille, of the bourgeois class and consequently quite unused to the "gentlemanly" method of settling disputes, a fact which, no doubt, encouraged their opponents to expect an easy task.

But the Court gentlemen did not reckon on the fact that these adversaries of theirs were totally devoid of what they considered honourable feelings. These lawyers and journalists of the Third Estate thought it no disgrace to refuse to fight, in spite of insults, and consequently the tactics of the "assassinateurs" were as a rule, unsuccessful.

As to Camille's own attitude with regard to the matter, we are able to give it expression in words which he is reported, on good authority, to have used. In No. 42 of the "*Révolutions de France*," the journalist very grossly insulted a Royalist actor, one Dessessarts, a good-natured, harmless fellow enough. He was exceedingly stout, and, apropos of this, Camille utilised a cruel story, which might well stick to its victim, making him ridiculous for the rest of his life.

The actor was very naturally enraged, and, happening to encounter Camille a few days later, at the Swiss Restaurant in the Luxembourg, promptly challenged him to a duel. It must be confessed that it is only in his answer to Dessessarts that Camille appears to any advantage in this affair. He absolutely refused to fight, saying:—

"It will be by continuing to harass the Black party and the ministerialists that I shall revenge myself. I might pass my whole life at the Bois de Boulogne, if I were obliged to give satisfaction to everybody who takes offence at my plain-speaking. Let them accuse me of cowardice if they like. Have patience—I fear the time is not far off when we shall have opportunities of dying more usefully and gloriously."

In the autumn of 1790 Camille's greatest friend and rival amongst contemporary journalists, Loustalot,

editor of the "Révolutions de Paris," died suddenly, it is said of grief at the news of the massacre of the Swiss Guards at Nancy.

There is an earnestness and a sense of conviction in this man's writings for which we seek in vain in the most part of Camille's earlier work. Loustalot, as a journalist, took himself and his readers very seriously. As Eugène Despois says, comparing the two men: "To appreciate Loustalot, it is sufficient to be a patriot, to know how to read and to have good sense; these conditions alone do not enable one to enjoy Desmoulins."

Loustalot's good faith and honesty were undoubted; his popularity was immense, and it is said that before his early death he could count on two hundred thousand readers. Camille, with that frank generosity which he always displayed towards the writers of his party, said that he "was the journalist who has best served the Republic."

It is certain that Loustalot was one of the best and purest type of Revolutionary, free from the stigma of inciting to bloodshed, although his bitterness could lead Saint-Jean-d'Angely to say, on hearing of his death: "Ah, then, he has sucked his own pen."

It was Camille who delivered the funeral oration of the dead journalist at the Jacobin Club, where his obsequies were celebrated for three days. On this occasion he seems to have spoken, for once, effectively and well.

"Loustalot," he said, "always despised the enemies who tried to defame him. He could not understand the baseness of those journalists who, instead of calling men to liberty and equality, do not hesitate to serve the aristocrats, whom they despise, for the sake of a little money, and defame those writers whom they cannot but esteem, in order to please their masters. Such men as these debase liberation and talent to the level of domestic servitude."

In justice to Camille, it must be said that, like Loustalot, he was not one of "such men as these."



### III

**I**N spite of lawsuits and Royalist challenges this winter of 1790 and the year which followed was by far the happiest period of Camille's life. He had certainly made plenty of enemies, but, nevertheless, he was successful, praised and flattered. Moreover, though not by any means rich, he was in more comfortable circumstances than he had ever been before. Above all, it was in December of this year that Camille at last gained the desire of his heart.

The wind was to blow softly from the west for a short time at least, and the weather-cock turned at the gentle touch. It did not last very long, this happiness of Camille's, but for those few months he felt, and constantly repeated, that there was nothing left on earth for him to desire.

We have seen the gradual growth of the love between Camille Desmoulins and Lucile Duplessis. It was no sudden, transitory passion, but something which had taken long to arrive at perfection, which had been at once a torment and an ecstasy, at least as far as the man was concerned.

Camille had watched Lucile grow from a beautiful child into a still more beautiful girl—watched her, scarcely daring to hope that some day he might win her for his own.

Now she was twenty years old, a woman with a woman's mind and will, in spite of her fragile and childish appearance. As to her loveliness there is no uncertainty. All the writers of that day who mention

Lucile Desmoulins speak of her beauty with enthusiasm. Jules Claretie, who had himself heard her appearance described by eye-witnesses, says that "she was of small stature, and very graceful, with beautiful fair hair, like a portrait by Greuze."

A contemporary writer, one Moreau de Jonnés, tells us also that "she was an adorable little blonde," but it appears that although her hair and complexion were strikingly fair, Lucile had dark eyes. Her own mother said of her that "her eyes were not blue, but black, like her father's."

Yet, on the whole, perhaps one likes Camille's own half-shy compliment to his wife the best of all. He was asked by Mademoiselle Ste. Amaranthe, herself acknowledged to be one of the most lovely women of her day, whether Lucile were not very pretty. "Mademoiselle," he is said to have answered, "she would be beautiful even by the side of you."

Probably Lucile Desmoulins' best-known portrait is that by Boilly in the Musée Carnavelet. This, and other existing pictures, certainly represent her as charmingly pretty, but, judging only by these, one might imagine that Camille's wife was of the wax-doll type in body and mind. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lucile proved again and again that she possessed character, and character of a very distinct and definite quality. We have already seen something of what she was as a wilful, charming girl, indulged by her parents and full of immature dreams and fancies. Under the strain and stress of her bitter-sweet married life, Lucile was to develop quickly. There was a strong soul and a brave spirit in that dainty Dresden-china girl, who, at first sight, would seem to need a landscape by Watteau as her fittest frame.

Camille had waited full seven years for his Rachel: at last his patience was to be rewarded.

Very gradually M. Duplessis' opinions had changed,

or rather they had been modified. Perhaps the fidelity of the young man touched him ; more probably Camille's ever-growing popularity was not without its effect.

At the outset of the Revolution, in spite of his sudden leap into fame, the journalist had been in a minority and, as such, was no desirable son-in-law for an honest, respectable burgess, however broad-minded and liberal of view. But during this year of 1790 things had altered. Camille had been the editor of a thriving journal for twelve months. Moreover, the Revolution had become, in a measure, fashionable ; it was the correct thing nowadays to be rather advanced, to wear brooches and breast-pins made from the stones of the Bastille, and to talk of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity with large capitals. Why, the King himself had taken the oath upon the altar of the Fatherland in the Champ-de-Mars, and at present men had no reason to doubt that he intended to keep it faithfully.

M. Duplessis began to think that perhaps Camille Desmoulins, this firebrand of a politician, might not be so objectionable a connection after all. It would be rather pleasant to be related to a man who was spoken of as the most rising journalist of the day, now that Loustalot was dead.

As to Madame Duplessis, we may be quite sure that she did all in her power to further the match. Her sympathy had always been with the lovers.

And Lucile ? Her feelings are plainly revealed in a letter written by her to Camille, but never sent to its destination. It is published by M. Claretie, and one cannot resist quoting from it, although it seems almost sacrilege to do so. Yet nothing else can show us so plainly the limitless love which filled the girl's heart.

“ Oh, thou who art in the depth of my being, thou whom I dare not love, or rather whom I dare not say that I love ; thou believest me insensible ! Oh, cruel one, dost thou judge



me after thine own heart ? And could that heart attach itself to a being without feeling ? Ah, well, yes—it is better that I suffer, it is better that you should forget me. Oh, God, judge by that of my courage, which of us two has the most to suffer ; I dare not confess to myself what I feel for thee ; I strive only to hide it from my own knowledge. Thou sufferest, sayest thou ? Oh, I suffer more ; thine image is incessantly present to my mind ; it never quits me. I look for thy faults ; I find them and I love them. Tell me then, why does all this strife exist ? Why do I love to make a mystery of it even to my mother ? I wish that she should know it, that she should divine it, but I would not tell it to her myself.”

So it came to pass that on December 11th, 1790, M. Duplessis at last gave his consent to the betrothal. Camille could not believe in his good fortune ; he had scarcely dared to hope that this joy would ever be his. His own tender words will best describe that first interview with Lucile as her affianced husband. It is a letter written to his father on the same day which contains the passage :—

“To-day, the eleventh of December, you see me at last at the summit of my desires. My happiness has lingered for long, but at last it has come and I am as happy as one can possibly be on earth. That charming Lucile, of whom I have so often spoken to you and whom I have loved for eight years, has at last been given to me by her parents, and she herself does not refuse me.

“Just now her mother came to tell me the news, weeping with joy : the inequality of fortune, for M. Duplessis has an income of 20,000 livres a year, has so far delayed our happiness ; her father was tempted by the offers that were made to him. He dismissed a suitor who came with 100,000 francs ; Lucile, who had already refused 25,000 livres, had no difficulty in rejecting him. You will understand her character by this single trait.

“Directly after her mother had given her to me, she led me to her chamber ; I threw myself at Lucile’s feet. Surprised to hear her laugh I lifted my eyes ; hers were in no better a state than mine. She was all in tears ; she wept abundantly, although she laughed at the same time. Never have I seen

such a charming sight, and I could not have imagined that nature and sensibility could join these two contrasting feelings in such a way."

Camille goes on to tell his father with distinct pride that Lucile will bring him a dowry of 100,000 francs, and that M. Duplessis also intends to bestow half of his plate upon the young couple, to the value of 10,000 francs.

In this same letter Camille announces that he wishes to be married in eight days' time, and implores his father to send his consent at once, by return of post. As M. Desmoulins did not reply immediately the young man writes again in feverish impatience on the 18th and 20th of the month, reminding his father that he is counting the minutes until his marriage can take place.

And, after all, the delay was entirely Camille's own fault. In his hurry and excitement he had forgotten to send his father Lucile's full name and that of her father and mother, all of which was necessary in order that M. Duplessis' consent might be made out in the proper legal form.

However, it was all put right, at the cost of a little delay. M. and Madame Desmoulins were overjoyed at the happiness of their son, and sent affectionate messages to Lucile and her parents, together with their formal consent.

Nevertheless, all the obstacles in Camille's path were not yet overcome. The date of the wedding had been fixed for December 29th, but it is a proof of how strong religious feeling yet was in France that, since the season was Advent, it was necessary to procure a dispensation before the ceremony could take place. Camille was not in high favour with the Church, as may be imagined, and it was only through the intervention of the Abbé Bérardier, his old school-master, that this dispensation was at last forthcoming.

It was the wish of Bérardier, moreover, to marry

this favourite pupil of his, and M. de Pancemont, curé of St. Sulpice, was persuaded to allow this, and himself only to assist on the occasion. But this same M. de Pancemont was determined to have his own way in other respects. Free-thinking, free-speaking Camille was, in a measure, at his mercy, and the priest positively refused to allow the wedding to take place unless the journalist made a public profession of faith in the Catholic religion.

This M. de Pancemont could not obtain in so many words ; he was obliged to be content with Camille's rather hesitating answer to his assertion that, if he were not a Catholic, he could not confer upon him a sacrament of that religion.

"Well, then, yes," said Camille, "if that be the case, I am a Catholic."

Two further concessions the priest did obtain, after subjecting the journalist to a catechism which that young gentleman managed to wriggle through, although scarcely with flying colours. He made Camille promise to retract his heretical opinions in the next number of his paper—a promise which, by the way, the journalist never performed. M. de Pancemont also exacted that the young man should make his confession before the wedding ceremony, and we know from the testimony of Madame Duplessis herself that in this respect Camille kept his word.

Writing some years afterwards, Lucile's mother said :—

"It was I who drove Camille and Lucile in my carriage, a few days before their marriage, to the Cordeliers, where a Father confessed them, one after the other—first of all Camille, and then Lucile, who awaited her turn at the other side of the Confessional. They confessed with such confidence and ingenuousness that I could hear everything."

And so, the way being plain and all obstacles removed, Camille and Lucile were married on December 29th at the Church of St. Sulpice.



It must have pleased the bridegroom's boyish vanity to see how the citizens of Paris crowded round the doors of the church to watch the wedding procession of their favourite writer. It was what we should call now a fashionable ceremony. One can imagine how the people nudged each other and then broke into cheers when they saw such famous guests as Sillery, Mercier, Jérôme Pétion, Brissot de Warville and, above all, Maximilian Robespierre enter the church.

It is easy to picture Camille, hastening to meet his bride, his queer, ugly face radiant and transfigured with happiness, wearing "a white waistcoat, worked with flowers."

As to Lucile, one can almost feel the stir of admiration which moved the crowd, as she passed up the aisle on her father's arm, dressed in her wedding veil, and a pink satin dress, with narrow sleeves and little basques. That wedding dress and Camille's gorgeous waistcoat are still preserved, as M. Lenotre tells us, at Laon, together with a silk garter worn by Lucile on this, the greatest day of her life, and embroidered with forget-me-nots and joined hands, surrounding the motto: "Unisson-nous-pour-la-vie."

Emotional Camille was very deeply moved by the marriage service. He writes to his father:—

"Bérardier pronounced before the celebration a touching discourse, which made us both weep, Lucile and I. We were not the only ones to be affected; everybody around us had tears in their eyes."

"Cry, if you want to cry," Robespierre is said to have whispered at sight of these tears of Camille's, as he and Mercier stood holding the canopy over the bridal pair.

After the ceremony was over the whole party made their way along the Rue de Condé to Camille's apartments, on the third floor of No. 1 Rue de

Théâtre Français, where the wedding breakfast was prepared.

Eleven persons were gathered about that large round mahogany table, which still exists, a silent witness of what must have been a merry, innocent festivity enough. Besides Camille and Lucile and M. and Madame Duplessis, Lucile's sister Adèle, whom at this time Robespierre is said to have admired, was present, together with Robespierre himself, Bérardier, Mercier, Pétion, Sillery and Brissot.

Probably the occasion passed in much the same fashion as other wedding breakfasts before and since. Doubtless there were speeches from one and another; we can fancy Camille, more or less incoherent, his stammer very marked in his nervous excitement. We can also imagine that Robespierre, the principal guest, proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom in careful, well-chosen language.

On the face of it, all was very peaceful, very pleasant—very ordinary, in short—but under the light comedy of Camille's wedding there lies a deep vein of tragedy.

It is only necessary to read through the names of the witnesses to the ceremony, one by one, names well known then, and since underlined deeply on the pages of history. It is said that the worthy vicar of St. Sulpice, Gueudeville, was terror-struck at the sight of these signatures, already so famous, or infamous.

After the names of Camille, Lucile, and M. and Madame Duplessis, comes that of Jérôme Pétion—handsome, honest, conceited, rather stupid Pétion, most popular of popular idols, soon to be Mayor of Paris, soon to think himself admired by Elizabeth of France herself.

Pétion was now one of the most advanced of Revolutionaries, but in a few short years he will be considered a reactionary; as a Girondin he will be hunted through France, never so worthy of admiration as in his brave, simple cheerfulness during that terrible

flight. He was destined to lie at last, starved and worn-out, amongst the stubble of a corn-field, his body torn and devoured by the dogs of the village—and he was to owe that death in some measure to Camille Desmoulins, once his friend.

The next important signature is written in a neat, careful hand. It is that of Maximilian-Marie-Isidore Robespierre. Camille considered, and with reason, that he owed much to “my dear Robespierre.” Had not the great Maximilian saved him when the rash journalist was almost undone by Malouet’s eloquence, only a few months before? Many of the numbers of Camille’s paper at this time were directly inspired by Robespierre; as far as was compatible with their respective natures, they were intimate friends.

Camille was to be indebted to Robespierre in a far different sense some three years later. He was to owe to that same dear friend his arrest, and his death.

Following Robespierre’s name comes that of Mercier, one of the few amongst the signatories who was to outlive the Revolution, and to write later his recollections of those days.

And here is the signature of Brissot, Jean Brissot de Warville, deputy to the National Assembly. Brissot was one of the foremost journalists of the day. His paper, the “Patriote Français,” was at the same time the bitterest and the most unswerving in its steady, cold patriotism. He was a Republican almost as soon as Camille himself, and only less daring than the younger man in the expression of his views.

Yet, not much more than two years later, Brissot and his party were to be the victims of the worst act of Camille’s life. He was to send the man who had been his intimate friend to death, by means of a scurrilous pamphlet, and to realise, too late, that it was he, Camille, who had killed Brissot, and with him the men who might have saved France from the anarchy which followed.



Read by the light of later events, it is a tragic document, this marriage contract between Lucie-Simplice-Camille-Benoist Desmoulins, journalist and man of letters, aged thirty, and Anne-Lucile-Philippe-Laridon Duplessis, aged twenty.

But at present Camille's happiness was unclouded. He writes to his father on January 3rd a letter full of joyous pride.

"All agree," he says, "in admiring my wife, as perfectly beautiful, and I assure you that this beauty is her least merit."

Finally he signs himself: "Votre fils, Camille Desmoulins, le plus heureux des hommes, et qui ne désire plus rien au monde."

Camille and Lucile spent their honeymoon at Bourg-la-Reine. Madame Duplessis had a small property there, a little farm-house called Clos-Payen, situated on the right-hand side of the road from Paris, just at the entrance to the village.

M. Lenotre sought out the house in recent years, and describes it to us as it is now, and as it was in those days when Camille brought thither his young bride.

It is a picturesque old farm, such as are common throughout France. The courtyard, round which the buildings cluster, is entered through a gateway, whose door-posts are surmounted by large stone balls. In this courtyard is an old well, shaded by a walnut tree.

The house possessed a large garden, shaded by trees, and bordered by a double row of lindens, and in the northernmost corner of the estate, connected with the main building by a foot-path, was a little stone cottage, which had been built especially for Camille and Lucile. This tiny house was given to them by Madame Duplessis, and here they spent not only their honeymoon, but also days and even weeks together during the next eighteen months.

Here Lucile held a kind of little salon, of a sort peculiar to herself; here the two lived the simple life,

as we should call it now, in the style of Rousseau and Bernardin de St. Pierre. A small circle of friends visited Bourg-la-Reine from time to time, most of them young and probably all the more joyous and irresponsible because they had escaped from Paris for a time, from Paris, which was now so grim, so deadly in earnest.

Madame Duplessis spent much time with her daughter and son-in-law, and Camille always speaks of her with the greatest affection—their dear “Daronne” or “Melpomene,” as the coterie at Bourg-la-Reine called her.

They all had nicknames; it was part of the game which they loved to play when they were together. Lucile was turn by turn “The indefinable being,” “Lolotte,” “Loup,” “Rouleau,” or “the Cachan Hen,” names meaningless enough to us, who can only guess at their associations, and the little intimate stories connected with them.

Camille himself was “Bouli-Boula,” “loup-loup,” or, more usually, “M. Hon” in allusion to his stammer. Amongst their other friends, Brune, afterwards Marshal of France under the Empire, was “Patagon,” Duplain “Saturn,” and Stanislas Fréron, Camille’s sub-editor, was “Lapin.”

It was Fréron who, of all the little circle, was most intimate with his young host and hostess. In common with most of the men who knew her, he almost idolised pretty Lucile; perhaps he loved her better than he or she knew.

It is from a letter written by him at Toulon later, when Camille was demanding the “Committee of Clemency,” that we gain the best idea of that charming, idyllic life at Bourg-la-Reine. Fréron has been warning Camille against letting his imagination run away with him, his philanthropy blind him—this Committee of his would be a triumph for the anti-revolutionaries. Then the writer pauses and lets

his memory stray back to Bourg-la-Reine, and to the old happy days which he had spent there.

He recalls: "the thyme and wild herbs with which Madame Desmoulins' pretty dimpled hands had fed him." He lingers tenderly over a charming picture of Lucile: "trotting about in her room, gliding over the polished floor, sitting for a moment at her piano, and whole hours in an easy chair, dreaming, giving the reins to her imagination, then making the coffee with a filtering bag, behaving like a sprite, and showing her teeth like a cat."

This letter, in a few words, brings Lucile before us, as no amount of elaborate description could do, with all her inconsequent charm.

Amidst the misery and turmoil of Toulon under the rule of the Terror, a rule for which he himself was responsible, it is strange and incongruous to read how Fréron's thoughts turned to his low-ceiled bedroom at Bourg-la-Reine, where the tired journalist rested after his week of drudgery in Paris. We see, in the glass of Fréron's memory, Camille's happy face as he leans in over the window-sill, mocking at his friend's slothfulness, we catch the echo of Lucile's favourite phrase: "What does that matter to me? It's as clear as day."

So the happy innocent days sped by; days which developed all that was best in Camille's nature. As Châteaubriand said: "A young and charming woman in awakening Desmoulins' heart to love, made him capable of virtue and sacrifice."

Little Camille cared that his admirers in Paris were openly disappointed in their favourite journalist. They missed his gay raillery, his bitter jests: a versifier wrote to him, parodying the warning sent to Brutus: "Tu dors, Camille, et Paris est esclave."

Camille was troubled by none of these things. He was happy, and, that being so, he had forgotten for the moment to be cruel even in jest. It was at this



time, early in 1791, that he declared his belief that the end of the Revolution was at hand. He publicly announced his intention of giving up journalism and resuming his work at the Bar, so that he might live quietly with Lucile—"to make a good husband," as he quaintly expressed it. This was one of those resolutions which are only made to be broken.

Once a writer, always a writer, at least as far as Camille was concerned. He could not so lightly abandon that which was his very life.

After a honeymoon which, we may be sure, seemed only too brief to both of them, Lucile and Camille returned to Paris, to play at housekeeping in their own little home in the Rue de Théâtre Français. Here they had for neighbours, on the second floor of No. 22 Rue de Condé, the Duplessis family, and for housemates on the second floor of their own building, M. and Madame Danton.

Hitherto Danton has not appeared in any very intimate connection with Camille, and it is rather difficult to say precisely when their real friendship began. Considerably later, in a letter of April 3rd, 1792, Camille mentions Danton to his father as "an old college comrade, who, while hating his (Camille's) opinions, does not extend his hatred to the man himself."

It is true that Carlyle draws on his imagination to the extent of making Danton and Camille appear as intimate friends at such an early date as the opening of the States-General in 1789. But although his description of the two men, who, it will be remembered, he represents as watching the procession together, is dramatic and striking, it is very certain that he had little or no authority for so connecting them.

It seems probable that Camille and Danton were acquaintances very likely from their college days, but that they did not become in any sense friends until

they were living in the same house and, therefore, naturally thrown together to a much greater extent.

Be that as it may, from the beginning of 1791 onwards there can be no doubt that Danton exercised a very great influence over Camille. Michelet has even gone so far as to describe the younger man as "a flower which grew upon Danton." It was the natural influence of a strong nature over one which was essentially weak in fibre. Camille, in spite of the boldness and originality of his pen, was, throughout his career, always more or less under the ascendancy of others. At first it was Mirabeau whose personality dominated the young man, later Danton's influence succeeded to that of his great prototype. Always, up to nearly the end, Camille accepted the guidance of Robespierre, that man of unswerving principles and cut-and-dried rules of conduct, who used the brilliant journalist as his catspaw, and finally, like the moral coward that he was, left Camille to his fate, rather than betray, possibly to his own undoing, his sympathy with the policy which inspired the "Vieux Cordelier."

Camille had one trouble in these early days of his married life which resulted directly from his great happiness. We have seen how from the time of his first entry into journalism, the young man found himself engaged in an incessant warfare with his rivals of the opposite camp of thought, a warfare in which the advantage of skill decidedly rested with Camille.

This very fact only served to make his adversaries the more bitter and vindictive, and the marriage of the Republican journalist was made by them the occasion for a fresh outburst of calumnies, directed this time not so much against Camille himself as against his wife.

It was a vile weapon, this which the Royalist writers used, but one unfortunately very typical of the newspaper warfare of that time. It is impossible to tell who invented the abominable scandal, but certain

it is that journal after journal repeated with variations more or less discreditable that Lucile Desmoulins was the illegitimate daughter of the Abbé Terray. Even worse things were hinted at, but these one need not mention here.

Of course, the lie was absolutely unfounded. Camille, in the letter to his father on January 3rd, stigmatises it as "utter nonsense," and careful research only serves to verify the truth of this assertion. But, nevertheless, it is plain that the young husband was deeply wounded when the libel was reprinted again and again, by the "*Journal de la Cour et de la Ville*," by Peltier in the "*Actes des Apôtres*," by Rétif de la Bretonne and others. Indeed, Camille wished to institute proceedings against the "*Journal de la Cour et de la Ville*," but, as he tells his father, the Duplessis persuaded him to treat such shameless falsehoods with contempt. "This respectable family," he says, "only laugh at the calumnies of these infamous aristocrats, and have counselled me to despise them."

Camille could indeed afford to do so. The love between himself and his wife was too deep-rooted and sacred a thing to be affected by such spiteful breezes as these.



#### IV

**T**HE first six months of 1791 were not only peaceful and undisturbed as far as Camille's private life was concerned, it was also a more or less uneventful period for Paris and for the whole of France.

The Assembly and the people in general had not yet lost trust in the King; the rude awakening of the flight to Varennes was still to come. They believed more or less in Louis' personal good faith, if not in that of the Queen and his other advisers. Those who were optimistically inclined began to believe that a system of government might indeed be established on somewhat the same lines as the English constitution.

The Republican party kept quiet, at least in public; they really had no opportunity to do otherwise. True, there were some few journalists, amongst whom Camille was prominent, who still voiced their opinions loudly, but even he is distinctly milder during this period.

Meanwhile the Royalists were working silently, but deliberately. They made their plans and only waited for an opportunity to carry them into practice. There is not a particle of evidence to show that the King ever intended to keep faith with the Assembly and the people. Later investigations go rather to prove that, all this time, whilst outwardly conforming to the constitution, he was intriguing with the Austrian Emperor and the "émigrés."

The Court sought right and left for members of the popular party whom they might corrupt and bring

over to their side. They found a mighty tool to their hand in Mirabeau.

There is no doubt that for some months before his death the great Tribune was the paid servant of the King and Queen, using all his vast powers for their interests. Yet it is scarcely fair to say that his principles were corrupted. Mirabeau was never anything but a monarchist in theory and in speech. He never wished that the King might be dethroned; he required only that he should reign constitutionally.

This being so, it was not an act of treason in Mirabeau to use his best endeavours to prop up the falling monarchy. Of course, it would be useless to pretend that his personal ambitions were not involved. He longed to be all-powerful himself, but as a prime minister, not as a Cromwell.

The leaders of the advanced party made no allowances. Mirabeau had been their idol, their greatest orator, their strongest support. Now he had failed them; he spoke and worked, almost openly, on the side of the Court. They called him "Traitor" in no uncertain terms. The newsboys cried in the streets, outside the very hall of the Assembly, of the "Great treason of Mirabeau," their sheets were thrust in his face when he left the sessions, he was hissed as often as he was applauded when he rose to speak.

It was on February 28th that Mirabeau made his last great bid for popularity, and with partial success. That afternoon in the Assembly, during a debate on the question of the "émigrés," he vehemently opposed the proposal to make any laws against emigration. This was the opportunity for which the "Left" or extremists had waited. Led by Barnave and Lameth, they raised a tumult of hisses and interruptions.

But once again and almost for the last time Mirabeau dominated the Assembly by the sheer weight of his personality. In a fury he swung round upon the men

who would have shouted him down, and quelled them with the famous phrase, thundered out in that great roar of his: "Silence, those thirty voices!"

They were silent—for the moment, but at the Jacobins that night the malcontents proclaimed their anger and their wrongs loudly and at length.

Yet Mirabeau was not the man who would let the opportunity pass to follow up an advantage. He also presented himself at the Jacobins, and confronted the fury of the Lameths and Duport. Once again he was victorious, at least according to almost all accounts, and finally descended from the tribune amidst thunders of applause.

We are bound to confess that Camille gives a rather different version of the affair. If we may trust him, Mirabeau was visibly abashed before the attacks of Lameth and his supporters. Camille, in fact, in a metaphor which he can scarcely have realised was really the highest of praise, compared Mirabeau to a new Christ on a new Calvary.

However, on this occasion, as on many others, it is impossible to accept implicitly Camille's authority. In this connection we cannot do better than quote Mr. J. H. McCarthy's very just estimate of the journalist's veracity.

"It would be absurd," he says, "to take Camille Desmoulins seriously or to rely seriously on his account of any event. He was above all things emotional, sensitive to the impressions of the hour; he cannot be gravely credited with opinions of his own; he was the prey of impulses, the sport of passions, a fascinating child."

Moreover, where Mirabeau is concerned Camille was biassed. He was now one of the foremost accusers of the great man, he who had once loved Mirabeau "as a mistress."

Nevertheless, in this case it would not be just to accuse the journalist of inconstancy. In his own



phrase, it was the wind that had changed, and not the weathercock. From Camille's point of view Mirabeau was indeed a traitor, but it is undeniable that a certain amount of private bitterness affected his attitude towards his one-time friend. Mirabeau had never taken his young protégé sufficiently seriously, and Camille longed to show him that he was a force to be reckoned with.

Not that Mirabeau had ever appeared to underrate Camille's powers as a journalist ; he knew too well the growing importance of the Press. There may be a certain amount of exaggeration in the assertions made by Camille a little later in a letter to Brissot, but it is equally probable that they contain a great deal of truth.

"His friends know how much he [Mirabeau] dreaded my censure," he says, "which was read by Marseilles and which will be read by posterity. It is well known that more than once he sent his secretary from a distance of two leagues to entreat me to withdraw a page of what I had written ; to make this sacrifice to friendship, to his great past services, and to the hope of those in the future. Say then whether I sold myself to Mirabeau ? I did not know that traitors, immensely inferior to him in talent, and but recently listened to from the tribune, were about to lead us to the ruin of our liberty far more treacherously than he ; and that they would force me to implore pardon from his great shade and daily to mourn the loss to France of her resources in his genius, and the loss to liberty of his love of glory."

This was written when a reaction had set in where Camille's feelings towards Mirabeau were concerned. He had had time to realise the worth of the great man who was dead, to see his services to his country in their true perspective, to know how much the poorer France was for his loss.

It is fruitless to theorise here for the hundredth time as to what would have been the effect upon history if Mirabeau had lived. It is possible that he

might have been able, by the power of his single arm, to save the monarchy. Again, it is possible that he might have failed and paid for his failure with his life, like so many of those successors of his who seemed in their day to be almost as great as he.

But apart from theories the bare fact remains that Mirabeau died on the second day of April, 1791, at the very time when he seemed most needful, most indispensable to the King, the Monarchy, France itself.

He had been failing in health all through the early spring. He was worn out in body and soul, though his brain and his mind were as keen and active as ever, almost to the end. Past hardships and present excesses overwhelmed him; he was, as Carlyle expresses it, burnt out.

There came a day when he made his last speech in the Assembly, a speech which was an act of service to a friend, the banker, de la Marck. He returned to his own house to die.

Much has been written of that death, dramatic and theatrical as his life, yet not, for that reason, necessarily insincere. It was Mirabeau's nature to play a part; simplicity in him would have been in itself an affectation. Wrung with agony as he was, he prayed to be surrounded with flowers, to be bathed in perfumes. He spoke to his friends in high-sounding phrases, until pain overmastered him, and he could ask for nothing more save sleep.

He was conscious of his own greatness. Like Danton, who, knowingly or unknowingly, echoed his very words, he spoke of his head as being "worth supporting carefully." And so Mirabeau died, surrounded by his friends, who mourned for him in all sincerity.

Paris was dumb beneath the shock. There had been no popular expectation of the great Tribune's death. All their indignation against this idol of theirs was forgotten by the people. They could only remember that Mirabeau was dead.

While he lay dying, crowds stood silently around the house, waiting to hear the latest news. When he had passed away, men, meeting each other in the streets, accounted for their undisguised tears by the mere words that: "Mirabeau was dead." On the day of his funeral, every shop was closed, all Paris put on mourning attire to follow him by thousands to the grave.

Camille Desmoulins was not numbered amongst the friends who stood by the bedside of the dying Mirabeau. Amidst the pæans of praise which rose to the memory of the dead man, Camille's voice was dumb.

It may be attributed to the journalist's horror of being accused of inconsistency that he would not write, even now, in praise of him who, rightly or wrongly, he believed to have betrayed his country. He even reproved the people, in terms which seem unduly bitter, for their adulation of the dead Tribune. He will scarcely even allow him eminence as an orator.

"Mirabeau was eloquent, but he reigned in the tribune rather by his talent as an actor than by the power of his mind."

Words which must be allowed to contain a certain amount of truth, when we consider how dull and lifeless Mirabeau's speeches appear read now in cold print, unanimated by the personality of the orator.

In another passage Camille is far more bitter and violent.

"Go then, O corrupt nation," he cries, "O stupid people, and prostrate yourself before the tomb of this honest man, the Mercury of his age, and the god of orators, liars, and thieves!"

These must needs seem to us cruel words, spoken as they were of a man who was not yet cold in his grave. One cannot but wish that at least Camille had kept silence, had forborne to blame where he could not conscientiously praise. But that was not in the nature



of the man, and his own best defence of the attitude which he took up at this time is to be found in another part of his writings.

There is something infinitely pathetic in the simple, unaffected words. It is as though Camille here allowed himself to express his real, honest grief for the friend, not his opinion of the public man.

“Death, which knits up again every attachment, brought me back to his house before it entered there, as indeed any peril of his would have brought me back ; and it was not my fault if his servants did not tell him how much I grieved for his illness. But I could do no more than write my name at his door. I had preferred my love for truth to the friendship of Mirabeau.”

## V

**A**LTHOUGH the plans of the Court had been laid secretly for months past, it is probable that the King and Queen had not intended to make any attempt to carry them into execution until it was proved that Mirabeau could not, or would not, help them to attain their ends by other means. It is difficult to be certain whether the stories of Mirabeau's private interviews with Marie-Antoinette are true or false. At least it was a method which she, conscious of her personal charm, often made use of when she wished to transform an enemy into a friend. A few months afterwards Barnave, staunch Revolutionary as he was, became her slave for life through a few kind words and an appeal for his sympathy in a degrading situation. It was also by means of a private interview that the Queen tried later to win over the Girondist party, through Guadet, one of their leaders, an attempt in which she was, to a certain extent, successful.

In any case, and by whatever means, Mirabeau's power and influence had been gained by the Court party. There is little or no doubt but that he was prepared to throw all his weight into the scales against the further advance of the Revolution.

But a greater power than his intervened ; Mirabeau died, and the King and Queen were left to carry out their plans as best they might.

What those plans were is well known now. We may read the voluminous correspondence carried on with

the leaders of the emigration, whilst, to all seeming, Louis was resigned to the prospect of becoming a mere constitutional monarch. It was the old story of too many conspirators. Part of their plans leaked out here, a rash word was spoken there. There were orders and counter-orders, commands and counter-commands, the one contradicting the other. If only all the arrangements had been left to be organised by one man the flight to Varennes might not now be known as one of the great fiascos of history. If Bouillé had been left to himself . . . but there are so many possibilities hanging on that word "if."

If the King had been another man, or the Queen a different woman, if his Majesty's legitimate meals had not been more important than any considerations of safety, and if her Majesty had been content to travel without her huge, gold-mounted dressing-case, things might have fallen out quite otherwise than they did.

There had been rumours afloat in Paris that the Royal family meditated flight. Again and again these rumours were contradicted by the King, and by Lafayette, who was still to some extent a popular idol. Some of the more wide-awake journalists—and amongst these Camille Desmoulins was prominent—put no faith in these protestations. At Easter time the populace, stirred up by Danton, prevented the King from going to St. Cloud, believing, and probably with good reason, that this was only the first step in a journey which would carry him beyond the frontier.

There was no active ill-feeling against the King. The people of the lower classes were, in fact, fond of him. They wished to keep him amongst them, they regarded his person as a kind of talisman. As for the more enlightened men of the Revolutionary party, the members of the Assembly and others, they quite plainly saw the value of the King and his family as hostages. Once they had succeeded in joining the



emigrants, Paris and France would be at the mercy of a Coalition formed to bring back the old monarchy, unreformed and unconstitutional.

Camille, as usual, was bolder than his compeers. Some time before the King's flight, he stated in his journal that only the name of monarchy was left to France, and that, setting aside five or six decrees, which contradicted one another, France had been formed into a Republic. Camille, indeed, had grown very bitter against the King as a man, and not only as a monarch. Again and again he jeers at his greedy appetite, his fatness, his slow-wittedness, all those little vulgar faults which made poor Louis such an unregal figure.

The King fell ill in March, and for a short time was rather seriously unwell. Camille takes the opportunity in the "Révolutions" to laugh at the Assembly for being interrupted daily "to hear the ridiculous technology of the doctors on the occasion of the cold of the eldest of the Capets." It is easy to see that loyalty and reverence for the King were almost a thing of the past, in Paris at least, when such language as this could pass unproved and unpunished.

During the spring and early summer of 1791 preparations were made for the elections to the new Assembly, which was to succeed its predecessor in the autumn.

The members were to be elected according to the property suffrage laws which had been passed in the preceding January, and the qualifications for eligibility to the Assembly laid down by these laws were stringent enough to make them most obnoxious to the advanced Liberals.

The extreme party foresaw plainly that the result of this limited suffrage would be to form an assembly composed of prosperous, middle-class men, elected by similar persons, an assembly which would be far too law-abiding and property-respecting to suit the views

of the leaders of the Jacobins and Cordeliers. They regarded these property qualifications as marking a distinctly retrograde movement, since the States-General, or Constituent Assembly, had been elected practically on a basis of universal suffrage.

Accordingly at the beginning of June protests were made by the Clubs and the Fraternal Societies of Paris demanding universal suffrage, and the repeal of what was known as the "silver mark" qualification. It was so called because in order to be eligible for election to the Assembly it was necessary for the candidate to be possessed of real estate, and also to pay a direct tax equal to a mark of silver.

We find Camille taking a prominent part in this movement of opposition to the property suffrage laws on June 16th. The section of the Théâtre Français, to which both he and Danton belonged, united in primary assembly on this day and refused to join in a collective petition which it considered illegal. However, Garran de Coulon, Danton, Bonneville, and Camille Desmoulins were entrusted with the task of drafting a petition which the members of the section would sign individually.

The influence of Camille is very plainly traceable in the literary style of this document. It is really an effective piece of work and quite worthy of reproduction.

"Fathers of the Country," it begins, "recognise your own decrees! The law is the expression of the general will, and we see with sorrow that those who saved the country on the 14th of July, who then sacrificed their lives to snatch you from the dangers which threatened you, count for nothing in the primary assemblies.

"To order citizens to obey laws which they have neither made nor sanctioned is to condemn to slavery the very men who have overthrown a despotism. No; the French will not suffer such a thing. We, active citizens, will have none of it.

"You have put civic degradation amongst the greatest penalties. The penal Code enacts that the Clerk of the

Court shall say to the criminal : Your country has found you convicted of an infamous action ; the law degrades you from the quality of a French citizen.

“ What is the infamous action of which you have found two hundred thousand citizens of the capital guilty ? To declare that taxation shall be imposed by the Nation alone, and, in another decree, to exclude from the rights of a citizen the majority of tax-paying citizens, is to destroy the nation. The social art is to govern all by all. Therefore annul these decrees, which violate your sublime Declaration of the rights of men and citizens ; give back to us our brothers, to rejoice with us in the benefits of a Constitution which they impatiently await, which they have courageously sustained ! Unless the whole Nation sanction your decrees, there is neither Constitution nor liberty.”

This petition was afterwards combined with one from the Gobelins section and presented at the National Assembly on June 19th or 20th. It was sent in to the Committee of Constitution, but nothing particularly definite resulted from it. The October elections took place on the property qualifications, and the new Assembly, thoroughly bourgeois as it was, fully justified the fears of its opponents.

Towards the beginning and middle of June more definite rumours of the plans of the Court leaked out. Frequent paragraphs appeared in Camille's paper and others, warning the people that the King was about to make an attempt to escape. But the lower classes of the populace trusted Lafayette and Lafayette trusted the King ; in consequence nothing was done.

The story of that 21st of June, 1791, has been told again and again, the incidents of those few summer days have formed the subject of more than one entire volume. One may read of it in fullest detail above all in M. Lenotre's vivid and powerful monograph, the “ Flight of Marie-Antoinette.”

It is with good reason that historians have dwelt upon the events of the flight to Varennes. It may be called with justice one of the great turning-points of



the French Revolution, and it is a question whether its success would have more entirely altered the aspect of affairs than did its failure.

For days past the rumours of the King's projected flight had grown more and more persistent, in fact, so persistent were they that they defeated their own object. The journalists had cried "Wolf!" so often that now they were not credited. Here is Camille's own account of the events of the evening before, as he saw them.

"I was coming away from the Jacobins with Danton and some other patriots," he says, "at eleven o'clock, and all the way home we encountered only one patrol. Paris seemed to be so completely deserted that I remarked upon it. One of us who had a letter in his pocket in which he was informed that the King was to go away that night, went to have a look at the Château and saw M. de Lafayette entering the gates at eleven o'clock."

The extraordinary thing would seem to be that the flight was even partially successful, since suspicion seems to have been so widespread.

The escape was discovered in the early morning, when the fugitives were already well advanced on their road. The news spread through the capital like a spark in tinder. Paris was soon in a turmoil. Excited groups of people ran hither and thither, not knowing to whom, or against whom, to turn. In No. 82 of his paper Camille expresses what were the feelings of the majority of the people at that moment.

"On Tuesday, the 21st of June," he writes, "it became known that the King and all his family had fled. It was at eleven o'clock at night that the general *décampativos* of the male and female Capets took place, and it was not until nine o'clock in the morning that the news was known. Treason! Perjury! Barnave and Lafayette are abusing our confidence."

Lafayette was naturally the scapegoat. He was responsible; it was he who had allowed his charges to

escape. As Commandant of the National Guard of Paris, he should have made sure that such a thing was impossible. In this emergency, Lafayette acted as usual like a brave man ; what was not quite so usual with him, he behaved like a wise one. He showed himself in the streets, both alone, and together with Beauharnais, President of the Assembly. He went fearlessly to and fro, conspicuous, as we are told, in his cocked hat, although in the face of the people's indignation he must have done so at the imminent risk of his life. The position was a terribly difficult one, for, after all, had any person or persons the right to stop the King from going where he chose ?

Lafayette and Beauharnais took the law into their own hands and despatched two couriers with the authority of the Assembly to arrest the flight, if it was in their power to do so.

The Assembly held a permanent sitting all through that sultry summer day and the succeeding hot airless night. The members from time to time went out into the Tuileries Gardens for a breath of air, but, nevertheless, before the session was at an end, many had fallen asleep on their benches from utter weariness.

Indeed, there was much food for the consideration of the Assembly. Some form of Government must be established for the duration of the King's absence, were it for an hour, a day, or a year. The form which that Government really took was, to all intents and purposes, that of a Republic. The Assembly assumed the supreme authority, decrees were issued in its name, documents sealed with its seal. It was a curious result of Louis' flight that he thereby drove the hitherto monarchical Assembly into republicanism.

It was in this fashion that the deputies of the people passed the time, whilst they waited for news, good or bad. Meanwhile the populace of the capital repaired to the deserted palace of the Tuileries. No need for ceremony now. The King and Queen had fled, and in

doing so had taught their people disrespect for royalty. Half-laughing, half-angry, they swarmed through the King's house, staining the rich carpets with their muddy boots, soiling the hangings and ornaments with the inquisitive touch of their grimy fingers.

A market woman seated herself on the very bed of Marie-Antoinette and from thence sold cherries to the jeering crowd. There were ribald jests and coarse laughter. One may be sure that the Queen was not spared in her absence, since they had mocked her already to her face.

That evening of June 21st there was a stormy meeting at the Jacobins. Robespierre made a violent speech, denouncing those in authority, accusing the ministry of complicity in the escape, and declaring that he did not fear the death which he braved by his boldness.

Camille was present at the sitting, and, carried away by excitement, he rose in his place and shouted that all who were there were ready to die with Robespierre if need be. The whole club responded with cheers and enthusiasm to the journalist's lead.

Tidings came at last, and after no long delay. The fugitives had been arrested and detained, although not by Lafayette's somewhat half-hearted envoys. It was the quickness and resource of Drouet, the famous postmaster of Sainte-Menehould, which had been mainly instrumental in saving France—to use the phraseology of the day. A series of misapprehensions and mistakes in the arrangement of the flight certainly aided him, and, above all, the weakness of the King, who, as usual, yielded with a better grace than was either seemly or necessary.

When Lafayette's aide-de-camp, Romeuf, arrived at Varennes, the Royal family were already virtually prisoners, although determined action on the part of the King might have led to their escape at any moment even then.



Then followed that terrible dragged-out journey back to Paris, in the crowded berlin, accompanied by the deputies from the Assembly, Pétion, Barnave and Latour-Maubeuge, who met the party on the road. Yet even in the dust and discomfort of the stifling summer weather the Queen did not lose her powers of fascination. Before they reached the capital Barnave was her avowed champion, Barnave, the staunchest of Revolutionaries heretofore.

That little procession found Paris in a strange state. The people had recaptured their King and Queen, but, like children when some ardently desired thing is possessed, it really seemed now as though they did not want them so very much after all.

Camille says in the "Révolutions" for this date: "What can the Capets have hoped on reading this placard carried on the point of a pike: 'Whosoever applauds the King will be clubbed; whosoever insults him will be hanged.'"

It was this line of conduct which the populace followed in the main, but the general feeling was distinctly hostile towards the prisoners. It showed itself from the first, and when the carriage reached the Tuileries, it was evinced in a determined attack upon the faithful bodyguard, who were only saved by the active intervention of the deputies from the Assembly.

In No. 83 of his journal Camille, whilst he intends to insult, really pays a genuine tribute to the brave bearing of Marie-Antoinette upon this occasion.

"She descended from the carriage," he says, "in the attitude of a suppliant, and with a humiliated countenance; but she walked up the staircase with her nose in the air, and quite unabashed."

In the same number the journalist describes Louis' demeanour on re-entering the Tuileries with undoubted truth, since it agrees with the testimony of

other witnesses in most particulars. Camille says that the King's only comment as he entered his apartment was :—

“It's devilish hot !” and then : “That was a —— journey. However, I had it in my mind for a long time. I have done a foolish thing, I confess. But may I not have my follies like other people ? Come on, bring me a fowl.”

After which not essentially kingly speech, Louis XVI proceeded to eat his supper with an appetite which, as Camille says, would have done honour to the King of Cockayne.

During the first few weeks which succeeded the King's flight and recapture public feeling ran very high. It is true that there was not much open demand for a Republic, but the Assembly continued to conduct a form of Government which was, to all intents and purposes, republican. Louis was, as it were, suspended. There was a distinct understanding that he was not to be allowed to resume the throne until it was definitely decided what were to be the exact limitations of his power.

Camille again was amongst the most outspoken of the journalists. The tone of his paper became very threatening towards the King, as the following extract will show :—

“As the king-animal is an aliquot portion of the human species, and as men have the simplicity to make him an integral portion of the body politic, it is essential that he should be subjected to the laws of society, which have declared that any man who shall be taken with arms in his hand against the Nation shall be punished with death ; and also to the laws of the human species, to the natural right which permits me to kill the enemy who attacks me. Now the King has aimed at the Nation. It is true that he has missed fire, but it is the Nation's turn now.”

As usual, Camille was before his time. Few, if any, of the politicians of June, 1791, went so far as he.

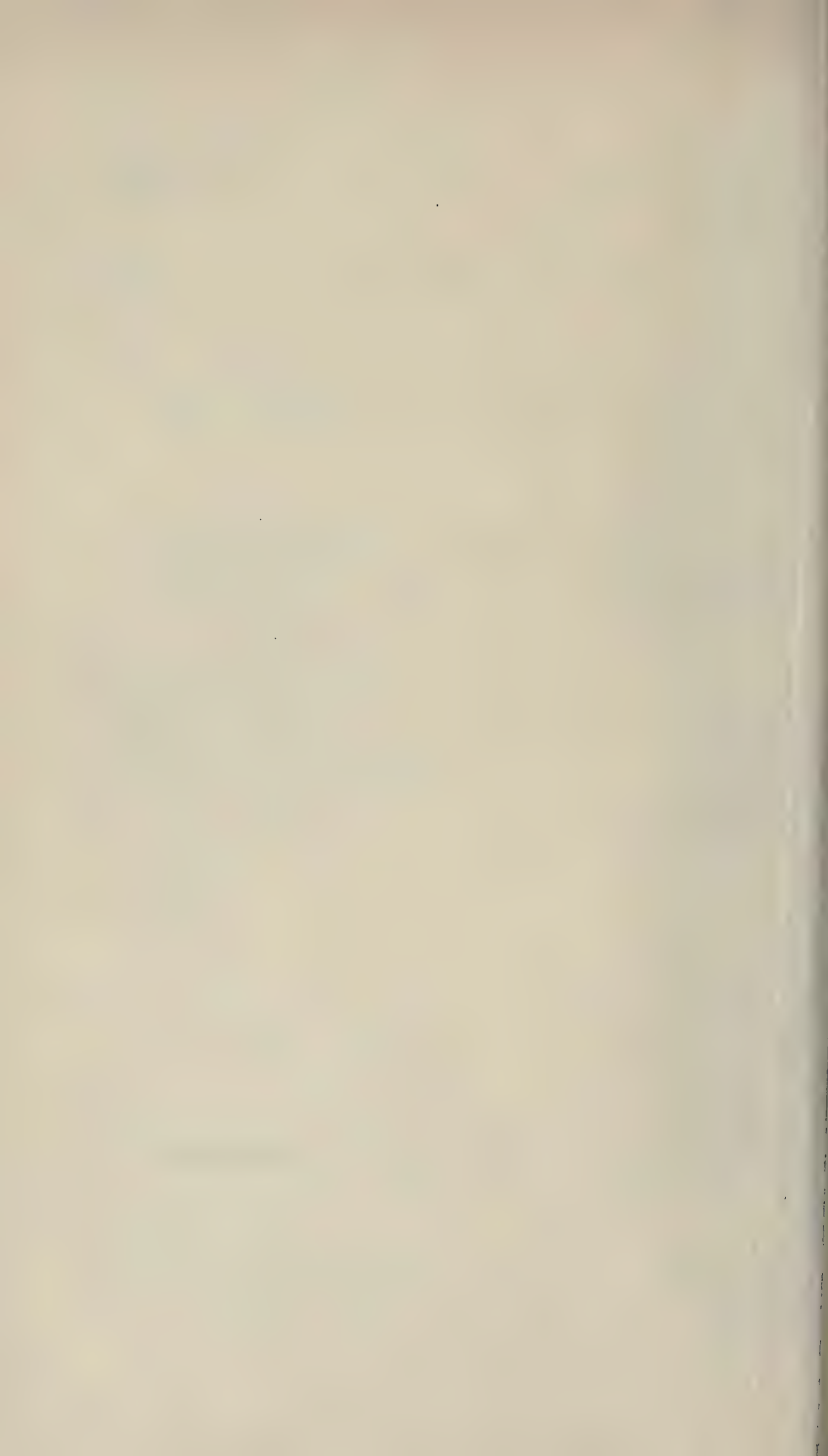
But these words, almost incredibly daring as they were then, were mere commonplaces in the mouths of men eighteen months later.

It was not only Royalty which Camille attacked ; he inveighed with violence against almost all the existing powers of the State. In his journal at this time we find him saying that the unfaithful representatives of the people were fair game, and not content with vilifying Lafayette himself, he writes with scorn and contempt of the National Guard which he commanded.

“The National Guard in its present organisation,” he says, “is a dead weight on the breast of the people—we may gather their sentiments from the *bleu-de-Roi* colour of their uniforms—and there will be no improvement until their shakos have been superseded by the woollen caps of the people.”

Camille was overhasty ; the turn of the nation was not yet fully come. Many events were to take place, much blood was to be shed before that January day, when the sovereign people did indeed take its revenge for the wrongs which it had suffered at the hands of Louis and his predecessors.





PART THREE  
THE EAST WIND

“He feedeth on wind, and followeth after the East Wind;  
he daily increaseth lies and desolation.”

*Hosea* xii. 1.



# I

**I**N spite of the immense upheaval of public feeling which was the result of the Varennes flight, the advanced party in the State did not, as might have been expected, at once gain the ascendancy. On the contrary, during the remainder of this year the Counter Revolution made its last great stand, and for a time it almost seemed as though it would be victorious.

In this apparent, though only momentary downfall of the Republican cause Camille's fortunes were very intimately involved. Hitherto he had been from the first consistently and steadily successful; now he was to receive a distinct and unwelcome check. The wind had changed once more, and it was no favouring breeze for Camille which blew now.

Immunity from attack had made the journalist very bold. He had grown to think that he could say exactly what he liked without fear of the consequences. It came as a shock to Camille to find that the Press was not yet free to the extent that he had believed to be the case.

The Assembly was by no means prepared to go to extremes as far as the King was concerned. The majority amongst them did not, as yet, desire a Republic. They wished for a monarchy still, albeit a limited and strictly constitutional monarchy. But the mass of the people was rapidly becoming more and more anti-monarchical, and it soon appeared that they did not intend to submit tamely to the legislation of their representatives in this matter.

As early as June 24th thirty thousand citizens assembled in the Place Vêndome under Theophile Mandar, and demanded that the Assembly should decide nothing as to the fate of Louis XVI before consulting the departments.

On July 9th the Cordeliers Club took the matter in hand and sent a similar petition to the Assembly, drawn up by Boucher Saint-Sauveur. This petition the President, Charles de Lameth, refused to read. Their demand being thus disregarded, the Cordeliers determined upon a very bold and aggressive step. On July 12th they appealed to the people to suspend the decree announcing the elections for the forthcoming assembly, by means of an insurrection; the Club in this manner definitely incited the populace to take up arms.

Meanwhile the day of the festival in commemoration of the taking of the Bastille was at hand, and the people became more and more restless and excited. On July 14th one hundred citizens of Paris drew up another petition, and the reading of it caused democratic demonstrations to take place at the Champ-de-Mars, where the "referendum" to the departments was openly demanded.

On this same day a large number of citizens adopted a petition drawn up by Massulard, which required that: "The Assembly postpones any determination as to the fate of Louis XVI until the clearly expressed wish of the whole Empire has been heard." These petitioners sent two delegates to the Assembly, but they only succeeded in obtaining an interview with Robespierre, Pétion and Bailly, who told them that their protests were useless as the decree exculpating Louis had already been brought forward.

Nevertheless, on the evening of July 15th, at the Jacobins Club, Choderlos de Laclos, who, be it noted, was an accredited agent of the Duke of Orléans, asked that another petition might be drawn up demanding

the referendum, which should be signed by "all citizens" without distinction, active, passive, women and children. This document was to be sent throughout all the departments of France for signature.

As the members were voting on the question a deputation from the Palais Royal broke into the hall. The President Anthoine suggested to them the adoption of Laclos' petition. This mixed assembly then nominated Lanthenas, Danton, Brissot, Sergent and Ducancel to draw it up, but it was Brissot alone who really performed the task.

Late that night a secret meeting was held in Danton's rooms, at which Camille, Brune and La Poype were present, to consult as to the best means of spreading the movement through the provinces and of obtaining the largest possible number of signatures.

Next morning the petition was read in the Church of the Jacobins. It concluded thus:—

"The undersigned Frenchmen formally and particularly request that the National Assembly shall accept, in the name of the Nation, the abdication effected by Louis XVI on June 21st of the crown which had been entrusted to him and provide for his replacement, by all constitutional means, the undersigned declaring that they will never recognise Louis XVI as their King, unless, indeed, the majority of the Nation should express a desire contrary to the petition."

The promoters of this petition obviously intended that all their proceedings should be marked by a regard for law and order. The municipality was formally notified, according to the legal requirements, that they intended to assemble in the Champ-de-Mars. Camille and eight others signed this notification. Permission was given, and accordingly Danton and three more read the petition aloud from the four corners of the Altar of the Country.

There was a heated discussion at the Jacobins that evening. Some of the extreme republicans wished to insert "nor any other King" after the statement



that they would not accept Louis XVI to reign over them. In the midst of the arguments and deliberations they received the notification that the Assembly had made its proclamation exculpating the King.

The petition was accordingly withdrawn, and an announcement to that effect was publicly made in the Champ-de-Mars next day.

As far as the Jacobin party was concerned this was the end of the matter. Danton, Camille and the rest were prepared to yield to circumstances, for the moment at any rate, and to give up the idea of a petition ; in fact this was the course that they actually adopted. Not so the extremists. A fresh petition was drawn up on the 17th of the month by the more violent republicans, the most active spirit amongst them being Robert, the journalist, who, as we shall see later, was a friend of Camille and his wife.

This time the demand was forcibly made that the Assembly should repeal its decree of exculpation. Neither Danton, Camille, nor any other noted Jacobin or Cordelier signed this petition, and there is not a shred of evidence to prove that they were in any way accessory to it.

It was read in the Champ-de-Mars, where an immense crowd assembled to hear it. The mob attacked and killed two men who were discovered hiding under the altar of the country, and who were suspected of being spies. In reality they were there for quite a different purpose, and one which was harmless from a political point of view.

A riot ensued, and Bailly, Mayor of Paris, and Lafayette, as commandant of the National Guard, hoisted the red flag of martial law and despatched troops to fire upon and disperse the mob. For the moment the action of the Municipality was entirely successful. Many of the rioters were killed or wounded and the remainder dispersed to their homes, terrorised and dismayed.



Nevertheless, Bailly and Lafayette had acted with great unwisdom—unless they were prepared to carry out the system which they had adopted to its legitimate end and to put down the extremists by means of the most stringent measures. The Municipality had definitely taken up arms against the people. Only a few years later Bailly, on his way to the guillotine, was to learn whether the Parisian mob had forgotten the “massacre of the Champ-de-Mars.”

It has been necessary to give this rather precise account of the various petitions in order to show plainly that Camille was not actually involved in this last and most famous demonstration, which led to the riots and military intervention.

Nevertheless, when a decree was drawn up by Bernard on the 18th, Camille, Santerre and Legendre were amongst the fourteen included in the accusation. The charges against them were somewhat vague, but they were accused practically of trying to intimidate the National Assembly, and of wishing to institute a Republic.

Now in theory Camille was undoubtedly guilty on both these counts, but in practice he was, in this instance, more or less unjustly accused.

In spite of the warrant which had been issued against him Camille spoke that night of July 18th at the Jacobins. In fact, he seems to have made a most violent speech against Lafayette and Bailly, whom he stigmatised as the “two arch-Tartuffes of civism.” After the meeting was over, however, he did not return to his own home, but took refuge with some friends in another part of the city. He remained in hiding for some weeks and thus managed to evade arrest.

Danton meanwhile took refuge at Fontenay-sous-Bois and afterwards in England until the storm should have blown over. It is recorded by an old writer, J. Adolphus, in his curious “Biographical Memoirs”

of the French Revolution, published in 1799, that Camille fled to Marseilles during this period of outlawry. He gives as his authority for this statement the "Mercure Français, No. 30," and Moore's "View." It is quite possible that the writer is correct on this point, but the unreliability of most of his information with regard to Camille makes one hesitate to accept his authority.

The affair of the Champ-de-Mars caused Camille's journal to die a violent death. The municipality was determined to put an end to the unbounded licence of the Press, to which, rightly enough, was attributed most of the trouble which had taken place. It would have gone hard with Camille if he had fallen into the hands of his enemies at this juncture. Prudhomme, the editor of the "Révolutions de Paris," was mistaken for him and very roughly handled by the National Guard on the Pont Neuf. In the same place Stanislas Fréron, Camille's friend and sub-editor, had a narrow escape from death.

Only one more number of the "Révolutions de France et de Brabant" was issued after July 18th, a number which the journalist dedicated ironically to Lafayette, the "phoenix of alguazil-mayors." In conclusion Camille asks his fellow-editor Prudhomme to send five numbers of the "Révolutions de Paris" to the subscribers of the defunct journal, thus completing the three months due to them. The number ends with the words: "It costs me much to lay down my pen," words which show so plainly the spirit of the true journalist.

Camille's printing office was sacked and the plant destroyed by some soldiers who were sent to arrest the editor himself, and were disappointed in their hope of finding him there. The National Guardsmen revenged themselves by handling his secretary, Roch Marcandier, very roughly. This man, a Guisard also, was a curious and interesting character. He certainly

seems later to have treated Camille badly, and his word-portrait of him in a pamphlet entitled "Hommes des Proies" is both violent and exaggerated.

M. Claretie treats Marcandier with the utmost contempt, but his career was picturesque and by no means wholly discreditable. He certainly displayed great bravery some time later, when he inveighed against the leaders of the "ultras" at the height of the Terror. This bravery cost him his life, and in that respect he was the precursor of Camille himself, since he died as the result of an appeal for clemency.

The enquiry into the affair of the Champ-de-Mars dragged on from July 23rd to August 8th, and the proceedings were continued until August 21st. On this latter date the writs of arrest against Camille and five others were cancelled in favour of a summons.

At the beginning of September Camille, perhaps emboldened by this fact, was rash enough to take up an aggressive attitude towards the Municipality. He posted a large rose-coloured placard addressed to "Passers-by" in prominent positions throughout several districts of Paris. It began in a fashion which certainly cannot be called conciliatory.

"I beg you to stop a moment and say to whom you would give the prize of virtue, if you had to choose between the benches of the convicts and the seats of the Tribunal of the sixth arrondissement. You have learned from the placard of Santerre that, false witnesses having failed, Bernard, the public prosecutor, supplied the false evidence by sending to the 'Friend of the Citizens' and signing with his own hand a false extract from depositions which did not exist."

After this fairly outspoken indictment of the legal proceedings of the Commune of Paris, Camille goes on to say that the only evidence which that body can even pretend to find, connecting him with the affair of the Champ-de-Mars, is that on July 3rd he had been



heard to read aloud a petition in the Café Procopé, maintaining that assignats were the patrimony of the poor.

“No,” cries Camille. “My crime is that I am uncorruptible, that I have not chosen to make my pen the slave of any parties who have courted it and bargained for it : my crime is that I am the irreconcilable enemy of all enemies of the public welfare. . . . One of the judges has said publicly that there were no more charges, no more depositions, no more accusations, and yet the tribunal, sitting with closed doors, dismissed my demand to be remanded, at least, for a further hearing. Thus I remain under an accusation, without any accusation !”

This placard naturally did not pass unremarked. A report was made to the Procureur of the Commune upon the “incendiary document signed Camille Desmoulins.” It was stigmatised as “insulting, indecent and disgusting,” and as calculated to excite citizens to “share with its author those sentiments of contempt which he impudently professes to entertain towards the members of the tribunal. The said writing being seditious, inflammatory and likely to disturb the public tranquillity——”

Nevertheless, beyond tearing down the posters wherever they were found and giving notice of their existence to the police, no further steps appear to have been taken.

The Assembly proclaimed a general amnesty on September 11th, and from that time the prosecutions seem to have been abandoned. However, Camille was evidently not very sure of his own standing in the matter, since he appealed to the Assembly about the middle of the month to ascertain whether he preserved his title and functions of elector. This question was disregarded, but we find, nevertheless, that Camille did serve in this capacity for the section of the Théâtre Français when the elections took place during October for the new Legislative Assembly.



Camille appeared in public on October 21st and read a paper at the Jacobins on the political situation at the opening of the new Assembly. He had just been elected Secretary to the Society of Friends of the Constitution, and, as he said himself, he regarded this nomination as an invitation to break silence once more.

Certainly this paper does not show Camille to be one whit less bold and aggressive than before. Neither his opinions nor his language are in any way subdued by his enforced silence, and he attacks all those whom he considers moderates as vehemently as ever.

“ We did not only ask that royalty should be extinguished,” he says, “ but that a tyranny worse than royalty should not be established in its place ; for when was any monarch so inviolable that he would have dared to treat his subjects as the citizens were treated at Nancy and in the Champ-de-Mars, without exposing himself to the tragic fate of a Nero or a Caligula ? ”

On the whole, however, Camille and the other extreme Republicans found it wisest to keep their opinions more or less to themselves for a time. The day of the Champ-de-Mars had left the Moderatists victorious. There was a great and pronounced reaction in favour of royalty—a reaction which lasted for almost a year.

Not that the King and Queen were genuinely resigned to their fate. The Queen at least was more determined than ever to reassume power, to bring back the old order of things in its entirety. As appeared afterwards, a constant correspondence was kept up between the French court and that of Austria, a correspondence which ultimately resulted in the coalition of the powers of Europe against France, and in the great war.

Yet to all outward seeming the King and even Marie-Antoinette were submissive. On September 13th Louis XVI signified his acceptance of the Con-

stitution, and an extraordinary outburst of loyalty followed. The Parisians seemed to think that the millennium was come, that all would now go well with France.

The whole Royal family, with Lafayette beside them, walked by torchlight in the Champs Elysées amid the applause of the populace. They appeared at the theatres, and the actors on the stage were neglected, whilst the audience cheered the King and Queen again and again. A verse of a popular song of these days has come down to us. The doggerel couplets express plainly the spirit of the time.

“ Notre bon roi  
A tout fait ;  
Et notre bonne reine  
Qu’elle eut de peine !  
Enfin les v’la  
Hors d’embarra ! ”

On September 25th the King and his family were present when a “ Te Deum ” was sung at Notre Dame, and on the day when the Assembly finally separated Louis again renewed his protestations of loyalty to the Constitution. He further propitiated the populace by distributing 50,000 livres in alms to the poor.

It was no wonder that, while the current of public feeling ran so high in favour of royalty, Camille and his like were perforce silent. It must be remembered, of course, that the journalist had now no paper and therefore no means of expressing his views, for it was never by the eloquence of his tongue that Camille could make himself felt. The time was not propitious for the re-publication of a paper on the lines of the “ Révolutions de France,” and it is doubtful whether Camille could have found anyone to produce it for him, even if he had possessed the necessary money. At the moment his principles were not popular.

It does not for a moment follow that because the

journalist was silent, he had in any way modified his views, or was himself affected in the smallest degree by the passing outburst of loyalty. It is quite certain that this was not the case ; but Camille, in common with others, was a little cowed. He waited further developments, we may be sure, with no faith in the protestations of the King and the seeming submissiveness of the Queen.

Possibly, as things were, he was contented enough to wait thus. He was completely happy in his home life, and probably, for a short time at least, a respite from the tension of journalistic work was not unwelcome. Not for long ; soon we find him writing to his father : " My paper was a power. I should not have discontinued it. That was a great folly of which I was guilty."

So we picture Camille during the autumn and early winter of 1791, happy certainly, contented in a measure, but a man, nevertheless, whose occupation was gone, and who must needs chafe at idleness until he is back in harness once more.



## II

THE Legislative Assembly met in October, 1791, and the spirit which animated this new governing body was exactly what might have been expected considering the circumstances under which it had been convoked.

The Assembly was elected on the property suffrage laws of January, 1791, the same laws which, as we have seen, had called forth such violent protests from the sections and clubs of Paris in the preceding June. In consequence this body of men had an entirely different character from the former Constituent Assembly, elected practically by universal suffrage, and from the later National Convention, convoked according to the laws of August 10th, which decreed virtually unlimited suffrage.

The Legislative Assembly was essentially bourgeois. By far the larger proportion of the members were provincial lawyers and their like. These men were nearly all young, and exceedingly enthusiastic. The methods of the Constituent Assembly had seemed to them very slow; they intended to reform everything at a far higher rate of speed.

With the opening of the Legislative Assembly a number of new actors appear upon the Revolutionary stage. The self-denying ordinance passed by the late governing body decreed that none of their members might be re-elected to the new Assembly. Barnave, Siéyès, the Lameths, Duport, Robespierre—all these who played prominent parts at the beginning of the Revolution are for the moment shelved, or,

at best, can only pull the wires from behind the scenes.

The new men, as has been said, were for the most part lawyers, and amongst these provincial advocates a little group stands out prominently. This coterie later formed the nucleus of that rather incoherent party which was to be known to posterity as that of the "Girondins."

It was only a few of these men who, in reality, came from the department of the Gironde, yet the epithet has survived their other titles, which were in more common use at the time, such as "Brissotins" and "Rolandists." Perhaps it is this last name which describes the party most exactly, since Madame Roland was the tie which bound their disjointed members together, and gave to them more or less unanimity.

Vergniaud, Guadet, Brissot, Louvet, Valazé, Barbaroux, Buzot—these names have more power to stir the imagination than those of any other men of the Revolution. Faulty they were, all of them, unwise often in their private actions and their public policy alike. They embarked on enterprises which they were not prepared to carry through to their only legitimate conclusion, they committed crimes for expediency's sake which their hearts and consciences alike condemned. It is not by any means certain that the Girondins were not the very precursors of the Terror itself—certainly it is in the fiery speeches of Isnard and Barbaroux that we first find terroristic methods demanded.

But, in spite of everything, these men were disinterested and pure in their intentions. They honestly wished to save their country; had they only been far-sighted and wise enough to accept Danton's offer of collaboration, it is possible that they might have succeeded. Girondin theories and Dantonist practice would have gone far—had the combination been possible.

From the first the majority of the members of the Legislative Assembly, led by the Girondist party, were Republican in theory.

Moreover, they had just had a very successful rehearsal, as it were, of the Republican form of government during the temporary suspension of the King. Nevertheless, it would seem that for the time they were neither anxious nor willing to carry their theories into practice. They had determined to give royalty another chance, and they began by establishing what M. Aulard calls the "Bourgeois Monarchy." The King was resettled upon the throne as head of the executive. His powers were limited, it is true, but nevertheless wide enough.

Possibly if Louis had been left to himself he would have accepted the position philosophically, but left to himself he never was, by his Queen and by his advisers. Rightly or wrongly they laboured unceasingly to rouse him from that constitutional apathy of his, they goaded him onwards, drove him forward along that road which was finally to lead him from supervision to imprisonment, from imprisonment to the guillotine.

In the meantime everybody was hopeful. It looked as though the new Constitution was working smoothly and effectively enough during the early months of the winter of 1791-92.

It was in January, 1792, that the first quarrel arose between Camille Desmoulins and Brissot—the quarrel which was to grow into that bitter enmity which only ended in the downfall of Brissot and his party. It all began, as one so often finds it to be the case where Camille is concerned, in a personal affront to the irritable and thin-skinned journalist.

Before the "Révolutions de France et de Brabant" had ceased to appear a newspaper dispute had arisen between the two writers. Brissot on more than one occasion reproved his colleague, whom he considered over-violent, in his characteristic, somewhat didactic



manner, and he committed the unpardonable sin, where Camille was concerned, of calling the latter a "young man," using the expression, of course, in the sense that inferred inexperience.

The offence rankled. It was Camille's greatest fault that he did not easily forget these trifling wounds to his vanity. He only waited for an opportunity to retaliate.

This opportunity was given to him by Brissot himself nearly eight months later.

Since the decease of his paper, Camille had returned to the practice of his profession, and at the beginning of 1792 he defended the case of a woman named Beffroi and a man, one Dithurbide, both accused of running a gambling-house in the Passage Radziville. They were condemned to six months' imprisonment by the Correctional Police Court, and Camille immediately published a kind of placard, which was posted everywhere, protesting against what he considered was much too severe a punishment.

This broadsheet of Camille's was only half serious in tone, but, for that very reason, it gave particular offence to Brissot, whose attitude in such matters was always severe and almost Puritanical. It was in accordance with the character of the man, a character in every way entirely antagonistic to Camille's, although, if we are to believe Madame Roland, Brissot, the man, was not in entire agreement with Brissot the writer.

"His writings," she says of him, "are more calculated to achieve good results than his personality, because they have all the authority which reason, justice and illumination may give to such words, whereas personally he had none of that, lacking dignity."

A very bitter article, written either by the editor himself, or possibly by Girey-Dupré, appeared in Brissot's journal "*Le Patriote Français*." This article protested strongly against the attitude which Camille



had taken up with regard to gaming, and ended with the words, certainly offensive enough: "This man only calls himself a patriot that he may insult patriotism."

Camille was very deeply offended by this article. As usual he retorted without the slightest consideration, and his retort took the form of a most scurrilous pamphlet, entitled "Jean-Pierre Brissot Unmasked."

It was a cruel and uncalled-for attack on Brissot's personal character and public policy, in the main untrue, or grossly exaggerated, but cleverly enough written to be exceedingly injurious. A certain amount of the mud stuck, and people remembered Camille's cutting phrases and well-turned epigrams, and used them with deadly effect later, when Brissot and his party had fallen from popular favour.

There was an old story against Brissot which may or may not have been partially true, but which, in any case, might well have been suffered to rest in oblivion. It was said that, many years before, he had obtained money under false pretences, by means of subscriptions for the publication of a book which never appeared. In consequence amongst the lower ranks of journalists the verb "brissoter" had been invented to express this particular kind of cheating.

Camille brought up this story afresh, he refers to it again and again, and for an epigraph to the pamphlet he used the quotation from the Psalms: "Factus sum in proverbium"—"I am become a proverb."

It would scarcely be possible to conceive a crueller allusion, made all the more so by its very aptness and wit.

The pamphlet had the success which generally falls to a scurrilous personal attack. Moreover, it seemed to have the effect of awakening Camille's appetite for writing. Only a month or two later, in April, 1792, we find him collaborating with Fréron in the publication of a new journal, "Le Tribune des Patriotes."

Only four numbers of this paper appeared; it

ceased to exist at the end of May, but it is interesting as showing an alteration in the state of public opinion.

Men were beginning to pluck up courage, but a curious phase now set in. The old Republican party, led by such as Lafayette, Lameth and Bailly, had fallen into disrepute, and there was no properly organised new Republican party to take its place as yet.

Camille expresses the state of affairs in very plain and unvarnished terms in the first number of the "*Tribune des Patriotes*," published on April 30th, 1792.

"If I go to the Jacobins," he says, "and if I take aside one of those determined Republicans who always have the word 'Republic' in their mouths: Brissot or G. Boiguyon, for example; if I question him concerning Lafayette, he replies in my ear: 'Lafayette, I assure you, is more Republican than Sidney; a greater Republican than Washington; he has absolutely assured me of it a hundred times.' And pressing my hand: 'Brother, how is it that thou, Camille Desmoulins, who in "*France Libre*" didst, the first of all, argue in favour of the Republic; how is it that to-day, while for Lafayette nothing will do but the Republic, the whole Republic, and nothing but the Republic, thou dost insist on marring his task and decrying it?'"

Camille was, at this period, the spokesman in the Press for Robespierre and his policy, and echoed his fears of the "Fayettist, Cromwellian republicanism"—"the aristocratic Republic of La Fayette and his military government."

As to Camille himself, he is for the Nation, he tells us; for the party of the friends of the Constitution.

"The true Jacobins are of this party, because they want not the name of the Republic, but the thing; because they do not forget that in the Revolution of 1649 England, under the name of a Republic, was governed monarchically, or rather as a military despotism by Cromwell; and that France in the Revolution of 1789, though called a Republic, became a republican government. . . . Heaven preserve us from the republic of Lafayette! This word Republic which Cromwell had everlastingly in his mouth does not deceive me."

M. Aulard sums up the situation as follows :—

“ It is thus that in April and May, 1792, the old Republican party, however dumb and resigned to the monarchy, was disowned by its famous chronicler Camille Desmoulins, and that the republic was denounced as anti-revolutionary by the most popular and most important of the democrats, Robespierre. After this defection and this anathema people scarcely dared pronounce the word ‘ republic,’ which is why there was no republican demonstration on June 20th, 1792.”

There is a curious fact to be mentioned in connection with the short-lived “ Tribune des Patriotes.” The joint editors, Camille and Stanislas Fréron, asked Marat to be their collaborator in the publication of the journal. Such a step as this either points to a real change in Camille’s policy, or to the fact that he was conscious of the necessity of affecting such a change.

Hitherto there had been little or no pretence of sympathy between Marat and his younger contemporary. The serious violence of the “ Ami du Peuple ” did not appeal to Camille. As a modern writer, Mr. Philip Gibbs has said : “ Desmoulins had none of this relentlessness of nature. His audacity was intellectual, not instinctive.”

Indeed, in the “ Révolutions de France et de Brabant ” Camille had frequently employed the power of his ridicule against Marat, pleading that he must not be taken seriously and calling him derisively “ l’enfant perdu de la presse patriote,” “ Cassandre Marat,” “ le prophète Marat.” Again we find Camille quoting from a fiery article in the “ Ami du Peuple,” but appending to the extract the following imaginary conversation : “ Who has written this ? ”—“ Marat.”—“ Marat ! at this name terror vanishes—one breathes again.”

A little later the young journalist repudiated Marat’s policy in a more serious and dignified manner. He is commenting on the demand in the “ Ami du Peuple ”



for "five or six hundred heads" and he concludes his article by saying:—

"For myself you know that long ago I resigned the post of Procureur-General to the Lanterne. I think that this great office, like the dictatorship, ought to last only for a day and sometimes only for an hour."

A printer's error served to increase Marat's rather natural rancour against his fellow-journalist. In No. 73 of the "Révolutions" Camille announced that Marat had demanded a passport "pour aller exercer l'apostolat de la liberté en Angleterre." By an unfortunate mistake the word "apostolat" was printed "apostat," and as a result Marat inveighed against Camille for the supposed intentional insult in eight pages of the "Ami du Peuple."

The younger man answered with cutting scorn in the next issue of his paper, explaining the mistake, it is true, but scarcely in a propitiatory manner.

"Listen, Marat," he says. "I permit you to say all the harsh things to me that you please. You write in a cellar, where the air is not likely to give you gay ideas. . . . I declare to you that as long as I perceive that you rave in defence of the Revolution I shall persist in praising you, because I think that we ought to defend liberty, like the town of St.-Malo, not only with men but with dogs."

Since Marat made no further protests it would appear that he tacitly accepted the fact that the error on this occasion was the fault of the printer. Nevertheless, his anger rankled, and when Fréron and Camille asked for his collaboration, Marat declined their offer in these words:—

"L'aigle va toujours seul, mais le dindon fait troupe."

In the meantime, the experiment of the Bourgeois Monarchy had not been successful. The Assembly could not legislate, because the King had exercised his power of veto. It was the last relic of power



which the new Constitution had left to Louis, and it was only to be expected that he would make use of it. Indeed, he would have been something less than a man if, placed as he was, he had not done so.

The first decree which the King vetoed was the stringent law against the emigrants, a decree which disinherited Louis' own brother and declared him and many others guilty of high treason. And secondly, he vetoed the decree against the non-juring priests, who had not taken the oath to support the Constitution.

In all things which touched his religion, the King felt with a strength and fervour which would have been marked in any age ; at the time in which he lived it was almost unheard of. He observed the rites and ceremonies of the Church with a simple piety which nothing could lessen or alter. It was the same up to the day of his death ; the religion which could govern and control his actions during those last terrible weeks was a real and living thing.

Consequently when the priests, the ministers of his religion, were threatened, Louis opposed the measure firmly and definitely. He further vetoed a third decree by which the Assembly had intended to establish a large camp of federal volunteers outside Paris.

All this opposition exasperated the people more and more. Of what use was it, they said, for the King to accept the Constitution, since he now opposed all the legislative measures of the Assembly ? The emigrants and the priests were the enemies of the country. The King made himself one with them when he supported their cause.

To add to these internal troubles a new peril from without threatened France. The Duke of Brunswick, in command of the armies of the Allies, was mustering his forces on the frontier. In this strait what would the King do ? His own brothers were amongst the leaders of the invading armies ; it was his own people whom he had sworn to defend, who were about to be invaded.

He did that which the country desired of him, but he did it with an ill grace. With tears in his eyes and in a broken voice, he announced at the Assembly that war was declared against the Coalition on April 20th. He acted at the instigation of the Girondins, who dominated the Assembly and at this time formed his ministry.

Louis' nomination of these ministers at the end of March had been a popular move. For the moment it had caused a reaction in his favour. The people had unbounded confidence in Roland as Minister of the Interior, in Dumouriez at the head of the affairs of War. According to some historians, Thiers amongst the number, the Court supported these nominations because they hoped that the Girondin Ministry would soon discredit itself and prove to be weak in the face of danger. If this was indeed the case, their expectations were doomed to disappointment. As to the Queen, she probably hoped to find in Dumouriez a second Mirabeau, another Monk. Indeed, if his services had been paid for highly enough these hopes of hers might have been realised.

All through the first six months of 1792 this discontent against the King and against the old constitutional revolutionaries grew and increased. We have seen how Camille voiced it in the four numbers of the "Tribune des Patriotes." Since that time he had written little, with the exception of the "Brissot Démasqué."

Nevertheless, he was busy in other ways. Writing to his father on April 3rd, Camille says that he has again taken up his ancient profession of the law, to which he consecrates all the time that is left to him by his municipal and electoral functions and by the Jacobins, that is to say, only a very few moments. He adds vaingloriously:—

"It is painful to me to plead bourgeois causes after having been concerned in such great interests and in public affairs

in the face of all Europe. I have held the balance of powers ; I have raised or abased the chief personages of the Revolution. Those whom I have abased will never pardon me."

There was much truth in these last words, truth which was to be brought home forcibly to Camille a little later.

It seems, then, that the journalist was a very prominent member of both the Jacobin and Cordelier Clubs, and it was at this time that these two great associations became really powerful. They began to dominate the Assembly instead of merely acting as forcing-grounds for its orators. Through its affiliated branches the Jacobin Club became one of the ruling powers of France.

The Cordeliers were even more advanced than the Jacobins, for the moment, and here Danton's was the dominant personality. The Clubs were working in conjunction with the sections of Paris and the Municipality, for the Municipality was now a violently anti-royalist and democratic body. Bailly and his supporters no longer held the civic offices. With the November elections of 1791 a new era had begun, and Jêrome Pétion was Mayor, a man immensely popular with the lower classes of Paris.

Danton was also a corporation official ; as Procurator-Substitute he had larger opportunities than ever, a wider scope for his talents as an organiser and a demagogue.

There seems to have been a universal consciousness throughout Paris that some definite plot was on foot. Secret committees were formed, but it is difficult to gather what were their exact aims, or even who composed them. We know that Camille was a member of one such committee, probably the very same which assisted to engineer the day of August 10th.

The popular demonstration of June 20th was not in any way organised by those in authority. They allowed it, it is true, but once it was fairly under way



it is probable that the officials were frightened at the dangerous possibilities of this horde of people who invaded and overran the Tuileries. At the moment, as we shall see, the party to which Camille belonged considered that the time was not ripe for insurrection ; they were awaiting their opportunity, and any premature action might ruin all their plans.

The dissatisfaction against the Court party had grown more pronounced during the third week of June. In consequence of that ever-recurring veto the Rolands, husband and wife, had written their famous and outspoken letter to the King, a letter which one could scarcely expect the meekest monarch in the world to receive tamely.

Louis' answer had been for once prompt and to the point. On June 13th the bulk of the "Patriot Ministry" were summarily dismissed, much to the indignation of the people.

The ostensible object of the procession on June 20th was to plant a tree of Liberty in commemoration of the anniversary of the "Tennis Court Oath" upon the terrace of the Feuillants. The object which certainly seems to have been kept in view by a large proportion of the mob was to endeavour to intimidate the King into removing his veto and recalling the Patriot ministers.

At one time it needed very little to make the crowd dangerous. Any hesitation or shrinking on the part of the King, any active reprisals from those who were still his friends, and the scenes of August 10th might have been enacted before their time, and even more tragically.

But on June 20th the huge mob were, on the whole, good-tempered. Above all, the King, to do him justice, behaved bravely and wisely. He took his stand in a prominent position, he refused to be intimidated, he even joked with some of the ringleaders. When the crowd demanded of him the revocation of his veto, he

answered with dignity that this was not the time to ask it.

When Pétion appeared upon the scene, rather late in the day, Louis gave him to understand clearly that he considered him, as Mayor, to be responsible for what had occurred. As a matter of fact, Pétion was immediately afterwards suspended from his office.

Camille took no active part in the demonstration, but he was present throughout amidst the crowd, and at the beginning of July he published his views on the occasion in a pamphlet entitled "Réflexions sur le 20 Juin 1792."

This pamphlet is of great interest, since it shows that the comparatively conciliatory and temperate tone of the populace upon June 20th was in accordance, as we have said, with the policy which the extreme revolutionaries wished at the moment to pursue.

"It is certain," says Camille, "that all parties desired an insurrection; but also that those among the Jacobins who have hitherto been least deceived in their political judgments upon men and events were apprehensive of the results of that insurrection. We saw plainly that violence would only profit those at Coblenz or Lafayette or other ambitious persons and would not serve the cause of liberty in the least. . . . I made every possible effort at the Jacobins to secure that this raising of the shields should not be anything more serious than a comminatory insurrection. Although I rarely claim my turn at the Jacobins, I spoke at three consecutive meetings on the following text: 'Nothing is more likely to ruin the affairs of the Jacobins than a partial insurrection.' . . . I especially recommended that the insurrection should be calm and that we should display a profound attachment to the Constitution. I pointed out that royalty was decaying day by day, that the life of Louis XVI was valuable to the Jacobins, that if he died we ought to have him stuffed, as Mirabeau said; and that the very best thing which could happen would be that he should dismiss the Jacobin ministers and send for others from Coblenz."

### III

**M**EANTIME, in spite of all that was passing in the world of politics, many things had occurred to absorb Camille in that other life of his, that home life in which so much the better side of him appears.

Although his pecuniary circumstances had so much improved at the time of his marriage, we learn by the letter to his father on April 3rd, from which we have already quoted, that Camille was now in want of ready money. M. Desmoulins, reversing the old condition of things, had written to his eldest son asking him to help him in the purchase of the family house at Guise. Camille excuses himself on the score that since the discontinuance of his journal he has had no balance in hand. In fact, as he says, if he only possessed the money he should have started another paper long before this.

Furthermore, he tells his father that, at the moment, he needs all the available cash at his disposal.

“At any time now I may have a child, and I feel already the cares of paternity in the expense of the layette and the tender solicitude of the mother, who concerns herself with the needs of her son, and loves him so as almost to make me jealous.”

It is easy to picture Camille's anxiety and excitement as the time for the birth of his child drew near. He was never a man to take things quietly, least of all such an event as this.

On July 6th, 1792, at nine o'clock in the morning, Horace-Camille Desmoulins was born, the baby who was never really to know either his father or mother,



who it is scarcely probable could even remember them in after years. It is possible that "the little Horace" may have had dim memories of that beautiful young mother, who must have seemed to his baby brain like some pictured angel as she bent over his cradle. Perhaps he vaguely remembered that boyish, excitable father, with brilliant dark eyes, who would romp with his "little lizard" in the evenings, rolling with him on the floor in peals of laughter, while Danton sat by quietly smiling and thinking of his own boys at the old home in Arcis-sur-Aube.

There is something very piteous in those words of Camille's which we shall read in his last letter to Lucile: "I would have been a good father." It is easy to believe that this is true: nay, more, it is easy to believe that he was a good father, as far as was possible to him during the short time that lay between the birth of little Horace and his own death.

On July 8th a ceremony took place at the Hôtel de Ville when Camille, escorted by Laurent Lecointre and Anthoine Merlin (de Thionville) presented his little son to the Municipality of Paris, as the first child to be entered in the new civic register of births, superseding those of parishes. On the birth certificate Camille wrote with his own hand the following rather grandiloquent pronouncement:—

"As religious freedom has been decreed by the Constitution and as by a decree of the Legislative Assembly relative to the manner of establishing the civil estate of citizens otherwise than by religious ceremonies, an altar ought to be raised in each municipality on which a father, accompanied by two witnesses, can offer his children to the country; the person present wishing to use the provisions of the law and desiring to spare himself, one day, on the part of his son, the reproach of having bound him by oath to religious opinions which he could not yet hold and made him enter on life with an inconsequent choice between the nine hundred and odd religions which divide mankind, at a time when he could not even distinguish his mother."

This portentous sentence does more honour to Camille's impartiality than to his sense of literary style ; it is typical, however, of a kind of phraseology which was very prevalent at the time.

Camille's pride in the little boy was unbounded. He writes enthusiastically to his father on July 9th, telling him of the event, and concluding: "And I too have a child ! My only wish is that he may one day love me as much as I love my father."

Later the baby was sent away to the same nurse at L'Ile Adam (Seine-et-Oise) who had charge of the little Danton. This was then the invariable practice with mothers of Lucile's class, and it was perhaps well that the baby should be far from Paris during the stress and fury of the next few months. As soon as she was well enough to be moved Camille took Lucile to the little honeymoon country house of theirs at Bourg-la-Reine, and it was here that she remained with her mother until August 8th.

Camille himself spent most of this time in Paris. There was much for him to do, for the blazing heat of that July weather seemed only like a physical sign of the greater fever within.

The Army of the Allies was gathering upon the frontier. On July 11th was heard for the first time that ominous declaration decreed by the Assembly: "Citizens, the Country is in danger !" Everywhere men read the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, insufferably insolent in tone and wording alike. Everywhere Royalist cartoons were disseminated, which held up the Republican party to ridicule. One of these caricatures must have been intensely irritating to Camille. It was entitled the "Thaw," and showed the revolutionaries flying in all directions terrified, while beneath their feet the ice of their new world cracked and broke. Amongst the fugitives "Janot Desmoulins" was to be seen, wearing the red woollen cap of the "sansculottes" and impeded by the weight of his lantern.

These and similar insults stirred the Jacobins to fury: the sections of Paris already displayed a most threatening spirit.

Baulked in their effort to establish a permanent camp outside Paris, the Assembly had obtained their purpose and foiled the King by an adroit counter-move. From all parts of France little columns of Federal troops were marching, to take part in the celebration of the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. By July 14th a large number of these provincials had arrived.

The King was present at the Festival, but he was greeted with ominous murmurs, and it was noticed that he looked pale and sullen. There was a rival King to receive all the applause of the crowd. Jérôme Pétion, the popular idol, was once more reinstated as Mayor of Paris. He was cheered when he appeared on the Champ-de-Mars, and men and women wore his name or his portrait as a badge that day, pinned on their breasts or in their hats, the word "Pétion" being sometimes coupled with the ominous phrase "Ou la mort!"

The presence of the Federal troops in Paris still further excited the populace. These enthusiastic, hot-headed provincials from the South and the far North-West brought a fresh element into the city. They were like a spark set to dry tinder.

It was not until some days after the Champ-de-Mars fête, however, that the most important of these detached bodies of federals arrived in the capital. This was that little troop of Marseillais patriots, invited by their fellow-countryman Barbaroux, whom historians, novelists and poets have since made so famous.

These men are sometimes erroneously represented as belonging to the lowest classes of the community. In reality they would seem to have been mainly artisans, retired non-commissioned officers, or men of even higher rank.



All through the blazing July days they journeyed northwards, dragging with them two pieces of cannon, and singing—singing always as they went a new song, but lately learnt, and which the countryside heard now for the first time. That song is living yet, with a mighty power still to stir the nerves and souls of men. It is known to us now, as it was known then, by the name of the “Hymn of the Marseillaise.”

The Marseillais federals arrived in Paris on July 29th. At Charenton they were met by Barbaroux, Santerre and others, who entertained them to dinner at the inn of the “Cabran d’Or.” They received an enthusiastic welcome in the capital. The infectious rhythm of their song was to be heard in every street, voicing the surging discontent in men’s hearts.

The men of Marseilles fraternised with their comrades from Brest and Calvados, fraternised too with their poorer brothers of the faubourgs St. Antoine and St. Marceau. There were public feasts on the site of the heretofore Bastille, much dancing, and speeches no doubt from Barbaroux and Fauchet, the ex-bishop of Calvados.

And under it all, beneath this effervescing surface, a plan was working, a great organised plot was being formed which would presently take shape and action. The leaders of the Revolution were about to make use of the power of the people, for the insurrection of August 10th was essentially a popular movement, a movement not of any one section, or body of men, but of Paris, nay, of France itself, led and organised by the Municipality of the capital city.

We may be practically certain that Camille was very deeply involved in the preparations for the day of August 10th. We know that Danton was the great mover in the insurrection, later he was to glory in that fact. Camille’s association with Danton was very close at this time, all the more so, because Robespierre, his other chief ally, kept almost entirely in the back-

ground. This attitude of Robespierre's has been the subject of much comment from his apologists and enemies alike, and many suggestions have been brought forward to account for his withdrawal from public affairs at this juncture.

The most probable hypothesis would seem to be that Robespierre was afraid. Not that he was exactly a coward. He forced himself to act with both moral and physical courage on many occasions, but there was a timid strain in his nature against which he could not always contend.

We can gather very little concerning the events of August and the part which he played in them from Camille's own writings. He scarcely mentions the insurrection in his letters to his father, and he was, of course, at the moment editing no journal in which to record his personal impressions.

During the first week of August he wrote to Lucile, who was still at Bourg-la-Reine, a letter which tells us something of his own doings.

"My good Lucile," he says, "don't cry, I beg, because you do not see your Monsieur Hon. I am up to the neck in the Revolution. How you would have been pleased to see me in the municipal cavalcade. This was the first time I played a part in public; I was as proud as Don Quixote. Nevertheless, my good Rouleau, my Cachan hen, was sitting up behind me. My God, don't love me so much, sweetheart, since it makes you suffer such a lot. I dined at Robespierre's to-day and talked ever so much about Rouleau, Rouleau, my poor Rouleau. Now, I am finishing my speech, for I am told off to read it to the Municipality on Tuesday. The *Rentiers* of the general council are desperately frightened by a few words which I spoke yesterday in the Tribune, and which were much applauded.

"I have consecrated my day by proclaiming on my horse in the midst of three thousand National Guards and twenty pieces of cannon, the danger of the Fatherland. I do not dare to talk to you about the baby, lest I should bring the tears to your eyes. It is eleven o'clock. I write so that you may have

my letter to-morrow ; I am going to rest, but you will not lay your arm round my neck. I shall make haste with my speech that I may fly to your arms. Adieu, my good angel, my Lolotte, mother of the little lizard. Kiss Daronne and Horace for me."

This letter, tender and playful as it is, would certainly seem to show that Camille was taking a fairly prominent part in public affairs. The speech which he mentions to Lucile is extant, and proves definitely that a decisive blow was meditated and even spoken of openly without concealment. After proclaiming in eloquent language his dreams of universal brotherhood, of fraternity between the "disdainful bourgeois" and the proletariat, Camille concludes with these bold words:—

"So soon as the tocsin is sounded let all the nation assemble ; let each man, as in Rome, be invested with the right to punish known conspirators with death ; and one single day of anarchy will do more for the security of liberty and the salvation of the country than four years of a National Assembly."

"The right to punish known conspirators with death." It is probable that Camille lived to regret those words of his—words which were translated into practice in the days of the September massacres.

After this letter, written some days before the insurrection, we learn practically nothing from Camille himself as to his doings, until after the downfall of the monarchy. But the blank in the husband's writings is filled in by the wife. Lucile Desmoulins had kept a diary from her earliest girlhood, and at this time it is of inestimable value, since it helps us to know how the events of August 9th and 10th affected her and Camille.

We cannot do better than give here the passages in that manuscript pocket-book of Lucile's which refer to these days. Her vivid, simple words, the little homely details which no imagination could invent, enable us to picture the scenes of that terrible time



far better than could be done with the aid of volumes of descriptive writing.

As we have already said, Lucile had been staying at Bourg-la-Reine for some weeks past. It was on August 8th that she returned to Paris.

“August 9th, 1792. What will become of us? I can endure no more. Camille, O my poor Camille, what will become of you? I have no strength to breathe. This night, this fatal night! O God, if it be true that thou hast any existence, save the men who are worthy of Thee. We want to be free. O God, the cost of it! As a climax to my misery, courage abandons me.

“What a gap since the 9th of August! What things have happened! What a volume I should have filled if I had continued! How can I recall so many events? Never mind, I am going to remember something of what passed.

“I had come back from the country on August 8th. The public mind was already in a ferment. An attempt had been made to assassinate Robespierre. On the 9th I had some of the Marseillais to dinner and we amused ourselves pretty well. After dinner we all went to Danton’s. The mother was crying; she looked very sad; the child had a bewildered look. Danton was resolute. As to me, I laughed like a madcap. They were afraid the affair would not take place. Although I was not at all sure, I said to them, as if I knew all about it, that it would come to pass.

“‘How can anyone laugh like that?’ Madame Danton said.

“‘Alas,’ I replied, ‘it is a sign that I shall shed many tears this evening.’

“We were to take Madame Charpentier home that night. The weather was fine; we strolled about the street; it was crowded with people. We returned and seated ourselves outside the café.\* Many sansculottes passed crying: ‘Long live the Nation!’ then cavalry, afterwards immense crowds. Fear seized me. I said to Madame Danton: ‘Let us go.’ She laughed at my dread, but, by dint of speaking of it, she was frightened in her turn, and we departed. I said to her mother: ‘Good-bye, it will not be long before you hear the tocsin.’

\* Gabrielle Charpentier, Danton’s first wife, was the daughter of the keeper of the Café des Ecoles.

On arriving at the Dantons' rooms, I saw there Madame Robert and many others.

"Very soon I saw that they were arming themselves. Camille, my dear Camille, came in with a gun. O God! I hid myself in an alcove; I covered my face with my two hands and began to weep; however, as I did not want to show so much weakness, or to tell Camille aloud that I did not wish him to mix himself up with all this, I watched for a moment when I might speak to him without being overheard and tell him all my fears. He reassured me by saying that he would not leave Danton. I have learnt since then that he exposed himself to danger.

"Danton was agitated. I ran to Madame Robert saying: 'Will they sound the tocsin?' 'Yes,' she said to me. 'It will be to-night.' I heard all this and did not say a word.

"Fréron had the air of one determined to perish. 'I am tired of life,' said he. 'I only seek to die.' Each patrol which came, I thought to see them for the last time. I went to conceal myself in the salon, which was unlighted, that I might not see all these preparations. Nobody in the street. All the world had retired. Our patriots departed. I was seated near a bed, overwhelmed, bewildered, dozing sometimes, and when I wished to speak, I wandered. Danton went to lie down. He did not appear to be much concerned; he scarcely ever went out. Midnight approached. They came to seek him many times; at last he departed for the Commune.

"The tocsin of the Cordeliers rang; it rang for a long time. Alone, bathed in tears, on my knees by the window, my face covered with my handkerchief, I listened to the sound of that fatal bell. In vain they tried to console me. The day which had preceded this fatal night seemed to me to have been my last.

"Danton returned. Madame Robert, who was very troubled concerning her husband, who had gone to the Luxembourg, where he had been sent by his section, ran to Danton, who only replied to her very vaguely. He threw himself upon his bed.

"They came many times to give us good and bad news. I thought I saw their project was to go to the Tuileries. I said so, sobbing. I felt as though as I should faint. In vain Madame Robert demanded news of her husband; no one could give any. She believed that he would march with the faubourg.

‘If he perishes,’ she said to me, ‘I will not survive him. But this Danton—he is the rallying-point! If my husband perishes, I am the woman to stab him!’ Her eyes rolled; from that moment I never quitted her. How could I tell what might happen? How did I know of what she was capable?

“We passed the night thus in cruel agitations. Camille returned at one o’clock; he slept leaning upon my shoulder. Madame Danton sat beside me, and seemed prepared to hear of the death of her husband. ‘No,’ she said to me, ‘I cannot remain here.’ Daylight being come, I proposed that she should rest near me. Camille lay down on the bed. I put a couch in the salon, with a mattress and a quilt; she threw herself upon it and took some repose. For myself, I lay down and dozed, although the sound of the tocsin was heard on all sides.

“We rose; Camille departed, leaving me in the hope that he would not expose himself. We ate some breakfast. Ten o’clock, eleven o’clock passed, without our knowing anything. We took some of the journals of the evening before and tried to read them, seated upon the sofa in the salon. As she read me an article, it seemed to me that a cannon was fired. I heard soon many more shots without saying anything; they became more frequent. I said to her: ‘They are firing cannon!’ She listened, she heard, and growing as pale as death, she fainted away. I loosened her clothes. Myself, I was ready to fall unconscious, but the necessity of helping her gave me strength. She came to herself. Jeannette cried like a mad thing. She wished to thrash a passer-by who said that Camille was the cause of all this. We heard crying and weeping in the street, we believed that Paris was full of bloodshed.

“We encouraged each other and we departed to go and seek out Danton. They cried: ‘To arms!’ and ran hither and thither. We found the door of the Cour de Commerce closed. We knocked and shouted, but nobody came to open it. We wished to get out through a baker’s shop; he shut the door in our faces. I was furious; at last they let us through. We were a long time without knowing anything. However, they came to tell us that we were victors. At one o’clock several came to relate what had passed. Some of the Marseillais had been killed. But the accounts were cruel.

“Camille arrived and told me that the first head which he had seen fall was that of Suleau. Robert was at the Hôtel de Ville, and had before him the frightful spectacle of the



massacred Swiss. He came after dinner and told us a fearful account of what he had seen, and all day long we heard of nothing else, save what had happened.

"The following day, the eleventh, we saw the convoy of the Marseillais. O God, what a sight! Our hearts were torn. Camille and I slept with the Roberts that night. I do not know why I was so frightened; it seemed to me that we should not be safe at home. The next day, the twelfth, on our return I learnt that Danton was made Minister."

Such an account as this of Lucile Desmoulins needs no comment. It is as though the girl spoke to us herself in those simple, unaffected sentences. We feel as though we saw Lucile before us in the Dantons' room that terrible evening, laughing like a madcap, because if she did not laugh, she needs must weep. There is something extraordinarily lovable in that tender tactfulness which would not make Camille appear foolish by imploring him, in the presence of his friends, to be careful. It speaks worlds for the confidence which they all felt in Danton that Lucile appears to have been almost reassured on hearing that her husband would not leave that strong, trusty friend of his, although this certainly did not infer that Camille would thereby be kept out of danger's way.

After all, these pages from the young wife's diary, showing a great episode of history from the point of view of the women who waited to hear the upshot of the fight, is of greater interest than any cut-and-dried description. It is so plain throughout that, for the moment, Lucile Desmoulins, Gabrielle Danton and Madame Robert cared very little what was to be the issue of the day. What mattered it if their cause was won, if it meant the loss of their husbands? For women are made like that.

As to the actual details of the attack upon the Tuileries on August 10th, one may read of it in the pages of a hundred historians of every possible shade

of opinion. We know how in great surges the men of the fauxbourgs beat against the Palace, led by the Federals of Brest and Marseilles. We have heard how the King vacillated, countermanded his own orders, finally took refuge with the Assembly, accompanied by his whole family. We know of that reiterated command of his that the Swiss Guard were not to fire on the people, a command well meant, no doubt, but which spelt sheer murder as far as these faithful servants of his were concerned.

Best knowledge of all, we have each one of us read how the Swiss died, faithful to the last, falling where they made their last stand on the great staircase of the Tuileries. Their memorial is written on the pages of history; it is written even more imperishably in stone by the shores of the blue lake in the land of their birth.

We can learn little or nothing of Camille's exact share in the fight, although we know that he took an active part. Since he was with Danton, he was probably in the forefront of the attack; beyond that we can gather few details.

There is one story of his conduct which appears to be well authenticated and which one would certainly like to believe was true. It is quoted in F. Hamel's life of Théroigne de Méricourt.

In spite of their violently opposed opinions, in spite of their jeers and scoffs at each other in their respective papers, it would seem that Camille and Suleau, once school-fellows, now brother journalists, had always remained friends. It is said that Suleau told an acquaintance named La Sourd on the morning of August 9th that Camille had just warned him of the extreme danger which he (Suleau) ran. The Revolutionary journalist, as one of the organisers of the movement, of course realised only too well the imminent peril of the hot-headed Royalist writer. Acting on a generous and almost quixotic impulse,

Camille invited his old school friend to take refuge with him until the danger should be past. Suleau refused the offer, and, as is well known, he was assassinated by Théroigne de Méricourt on the morning of August 10th. Lucile tells us, as we have seen, that Camille actually witnessed the murder. Furthermore, she says that her husband observed to Suleau the day before: "You are going to fight for the King to-morrow; then you will be hanged."

After the sack of the Tuileries Palace Lucile was brought her share of the spoil. She tells us that she received some of the articles from the unfortunate Queen's toilet-table, such as brushes, mirrors and sponges. In common with many men and women of her time and class, Camille's young wife had hitherto felt an almost impersonal hatred of Marie-Antoinette; now, for the first time, she seems to have been touched with pity.

Indeed, what wife and mother as tender-hearted as was Lucile could have failed to pity the misfortunes of that sorrowful woman, a queen no longer.



## IV

**T**HE French Monarchy had fallen once and for all. Henceforth there was no more question of reinstating Louis as King. He and his whole family were literally imprisoned now in the Tower of the Temple, as they had been for long prisoners in reality in the more splendid dungeon of the Tuileries.

It remained now to decide what was to be done with this heretofore King of France, from henceforth to be named only "Citizen Capet." This decision, together with many others, did not rest with the present Assembly, nor with the Revolutionary Commune, now masters of Paris. It would be the task of the National Convention, so soon to be elected, to resolve upon the fate of the King and his family.

Meanwhile France must be governed, and to that end a Provisional Executive Council was formed on August 13th, beginning its functions on that day. It consisted of six ministers, each of whom presided for a week in turn as President. These Ministers were chosen by the Legislative Assembly, and the first to be elected was Danton, as Minister of Justice. The other members of the Council were Monge, Minister of Marine, Lebrun, who was responsible for Foreign Affairs, Roland, for those of the Interior, Servan, Minister of War, and Clavière, at the Ministry of the Bureau of Public Taxes.

During the short time that he held office, Danton was the real head of the Executive Council, and the

meetings were held at his quarters in the Ministry of Justice.

Danton named Camille as his Secretary-General, and the journalist at once took up the duties of that post. He speaks of his new position in an almost despondent fashion, in spite of his obvious pride, when he writes to his father on August 15th.

“You have learnt from the journals the news of August 10th. It only remains for me to tell you of that which concerns myself. My friend, Danton, has become Minister of Justice, by the grace of the cannon ; this bloody day meant for both of us that we should rise or fall together. He said in the National Assembly : ‘ If I had been vanquished, I should have been a criminal.’

“The cause of liberty has triumphed. Behold me living in the Palace of Maupeou and of Lamoignon. In spite of all your predictions that I should never do anything, I see myself raised to the topmost rung of the ladder attainable by one of our profession, and far from being more vain, I am much less so than ten years ago, because I value much less than then, the imagination, the warmth, the talent and the patriotism, which I did not distinguish from the sensibility, the humanity and the love of one’s kind that the years lessen. They have not cooled in me my filial love, and your son, become secretary-general of the department of justice and that which one calls secretary to the seals, hopes not to be long before he gives you the marks of this. I believe liberty to be ensured by the revolution of the 10th of August. It remains for us to render France happy and flourishing as well as free. It is to this that I am about to consecrate my night watches.”

Later Camille cannot resist a little outburst of triumph, when he thinks of the way in which he has vindicated himself before his fellow-townsmen.

“How the people of Guise, so full of envy, hatred and petty passions, will burst with bitterness to-day !”

But afterwards comes the strange note of despondency : “It has but rendered me more than ever melancholy and anxious and made me feel more keenly

all the ills of my fellow-citizens and the miseries of human life."

In connection with Camille's nomination as Secretary to the Minister of Justice, a curious incident and one characteristic of the time is related by M. Lenotre in his volume "The Tribunal of the Terror."

He publishes a letter written to Camille immediately after August 10th by Fouquier-Tinville. The future Public Prosecutor of evil notoriety appeals to the young man as his "dear relative" (it appears that they were distantly related through the family of de Viefville), and implores him to help the writer to obtain a government post of some description.

It is very probable that Camille was instrumental in securing for him the position of Public Prosecutor, the duties of which Fouquier took up at about this time. It is a curious example of the irony of fate, when one thinks that it may have been Camille himself who procured for his humble relation that office, wherein Fouquier was mainly instrumental in obtaining the condemnation of the Dantonists.

The question whether or not Camille was involved in the prison massacres of September 2nd and 3rd is subsidiary to the larger issue of Danton's implication. As Minister of Justice and as Camille's superior alike, the greater share of responsibility rests with him.

Contemporary writers and a large number of modern historians consider Danton as responsible for the massacres, and even as their prime mover. So great an authority as Lord Acton himself takes this view, although he writes of the affair as a concerted plan on the part of the Government.

Several of Danton's biographers, however, and notably Mr. H. Belloc, have almost conclusively proved that the Minister of Justice took no active part whatever in the organisation of the massacres. Mr. Belloc brings forward very strong evidence to show that the circular letter, which, stamped as it was with the



impress of the Ministry of Justice, has always been considered to prove Danton's complicity in the plot, was written on paper stolen for the purpose from the Minister's office. He believes that this letter, which was sent throughout the provinces to incite to further massacres, was compiled by a committee mainly inspired by Marat.

The real truth would seem to be that Danton tacitly permitted the massacres, although he did not himself organise them. Possibly he felt himself to be powerless in the matter, and feared to lose his influence with the people if he interfered with their frightful vengeance. The country was in the most terrible and imminent danger; he may have believed, with the mob, that there was real peril from the plots of the imprisoned aristocrats. All the thoughts and actions of the Minister of Justice at this moment were directed towards the defeat of the enemy who was advancing towards Paris. In person he superintended the business of enlistment and harangued the people, stirring them up by the dominating power of his personality and his fiery, inspiring phrases. It was at this time that he thundered out those memorable words which have echoed down through history:—

“Pour les vaincre, pour les attérer, que faut-il? De l'audace, encore de l'audace, et toujours l'audace!”

In any case it is scarcely possible to believe, with Lord Acton, that the work of murder was performed by men paid directly by the governing body of Paris. Paid they may have been, and no doubt were, but may they not have received their wages from the Committee which engineered the massacres and sent out the circulars purporting to emanate from the Ministry of Justice?

What we have said of Danton applies to Camille in a minor degree. He was the Minister's Secretary, and probably shared his policy with regard to the prison

massacres. We have no means of ascertaining what his private opinion concerning them may have been, but it must be confessed that his pamphlet on the events of June 20th, from which we have already quoted, indirectly advocated such a method of popular vengeance as that which was so terribly carried out on September 2nd and 3rd.

It is almost certain that Danton and Camille alike later felt themselves to have been morally responsible for the massacres. The epithet of "Septembriseur" had the power to make Danton falter to the day of his death; he could not hear it applied to him, with a conscience clear of guilt.

Mr. Philip Gibbs has put the case well and impartially in one of his studies of the principal personages of the French Revolution.

"Danton must be blamed," he says, "like Desmoulins and Marat, for violence of speech which led to atrocious actions . . . for working upon the imagination of a people already hysterical with fear and hatred, and afterwards for condoning and slurring over atrocities which dragged the revolutionary ideals of liberty and justice through the shambles of barbarous revenge. . . . Judging them with as much knowledge of the facts as history affords us, we may acquit Danton and Desmoulins of murderous design, though not of bloodguiltiness."

Camille did not retain for very long his official position at the Ministry of Justice. Together with Danton himself, he was anxious to be elected as Deputy to the National Convention which was to open at the end of September. The nominations for the new Assembly took place at the beginning of the month, and on September 8th Camille was elected as one of the deputies for Paris, although not without some opposition. It was only after two ballots that he obtained the majority of votes over Kersaint.

Camille seems to have taken his new position very seriously—more seriously perhaps than his constituents expected of him. In his "Fragment de l'Histoire

Secrète de la Révolution " he describes his feelings at the opening of the new assembly.

Those are indeed to be envied, he says, who have just been named deputies to the Convention. Was there ever a more magnificent mission, a more splendid opportunity of glory? It is their task to punish the tyrant, to build a constitution, to defeat the nations of Europe, finally to "make a people." Certainly this is no light or superficial view of the situation.

It was about this time that, according to Roland's "Appeal," Danton proposed to Roland, the Minister of the Interior, to institute a journal for the purpose of biassing the public mind in the direction which the then government wished. This periodical was to have been edited by Camille, but the plan never materialised.

The National Convention met for the first time on September 20th. It had been elected by almost absolute universal suffrage in accordance with a law passed by the Legislative Assembly on August 10th. Although its numbers were by no means complete on the opening date, the Convention immediately proceeded to the most important measures possible.

It decreed on September 21st that Royalty was abolished in France, and on the following day the Republic was proclaimed. Both these measures were afterwards submitted to the ratification of the people, by means of a referendum, and were accepted by a majority of votes.

It was thus that the first French Republic was created, without any extraordinary enthusiasm, but also without any active opposition. On September 25th Danton gave a great and lasting title to the new government when he proposed the motion that "the French Republic is one and indivisible."

In the middle of September we learn that Camille was appointed by the Provisional Executive Council to inspect the district of Laon, Guise and Soissons,



but we cannot find that he really ever undertook this mission, in fact, it is practically certain that he did not leave Paris for any period, however short.

Camille's old journal, the "*Révolutions de France et de Brabant*," reappeared for a short time in October of this year under the editorship of Merlin (de Thionville). Camille seems to have taken the position of a kind of leader-writer on the staff of the paper, but very little of the old spirit was revived with the name, and it was plain from the first that it could not hope for a long life.

The violent tone of the journal can be judged by one example. It bore as its epigraph a quotation from Seneca: "*Victima haud ulla amplior potest magisque opima mactari Jovi quam rex*," which may be roughly translated as follows: "There is no victim more agreeable to Jupiter than a king as the sacrifice."

A few numbers only of the journal appeared, and they have little value or interest. It is evident, however, that Camille was considered to share with Merlin the responsibility of the production, for one of the few monarchical journals of that day, the short-lived "*Journal Français*," contains the following reference to the "*Révolutions de France*" in its first number, dated November 15th, 1792, and addressed to the Society of Jacobins:—

"Brothers and friends, you are sovereigns, because you say so every day in your tribune; you are wise, because brothers Merlin and Desmoulins give a journal gratis, which calls forth the admiration of the eighty-three departments and of all Europe."

And now the shadow of a great duty to be performed hung over the National Convention. They must decide upon the fate of Louis XVI.

It was in the debates on this question that the first signs of a division in the Convention began to appear. The party of the Mountain, which had been com-

paratively weak in the Legislative Assembly, had now assumed formidable proportions and could contend on equal terms with the powerful Girondin faction. It is misleading, however, to imagine these two parties as being opposed to one another in their ideas of the Republic. This misconception, nevertheless, has become very general. People are apt to think of the Girondins as being essentially moderate and constitutional in their aims, almost monarchical in fact, whilst the Montagnards stand for extreme democracy and terrorism. This conception is very wide of the mark. The two parties were equally republican in their aims and ideals; it was another question which separated them. M. Aulard sums up the situation very clearly when he says that the essential difference between the Montagnards and the Girondins was that the former wished to see Paris provisionally, during the war, at the head of the united Republic; the latter did not wish the capital to exert any supremacy over the departments, even in time of war.

The first sign of a split in the Convention appeared, as we have said, with respect to this question of the King's trial. Without being more inclined than the Montagnards to show clemency towards Louis, the Girondins wished to appeal to the people in general and thus ascertain their views on the subject, whilst the Mountain contended that the Convention alone had full power to try and to condemn the King.

The trial began on December 11th, and was conducted with a certain amount of dignity and order; it is evident that the Convention had in mind the process and condemnation of Charles I.

As to Louis, he bore himself throughout with great courage, although from the first it is plain he had small hope that his life would be spared. During the long trial most of the leading orators of the Convention set forth their views with regard to the sentence which was to be passed upon the King. Camille had rightly

no confidence in his own powers as a speaker. He accordingly put into writing his "Opinion upon the Judgment of Louis XVI."

The power of his pen was never used to worse purpose, except perhaps in his attacks upon Brissot and the Girondin party. One would think that the writer was impelled by malignity against the man, as well as wrath against the King, and his vituperation is even womanish in its inconsequence.

Still it is only fair to Camille to remember that he was not alone in this almost personal feeling of hatred towards Louis. The King had been culpably, criminally weak, and it is perhaps little to be wondered at that this criminality was imputed more to malice than to lack of strength.

The Constitution had set it down that the person of the King was inviolable, but Camille argues that the primitive code of nations decrees that no law is law until it is freely subscribed to by the people. He contends that the populace had never agreed to this law of inviolability. In fact, they protested against it after the return from Varennes in the famous Petition of the Champ-de-Mars, the signing of which, as he says, was only partly prevented by the massacre of patriots.

Furthermore, Camille considers that if there had been a contract between the King and the people this would have become null, owing to the repeated "treasons" of the King, one of the contracting parties. Therefore the writer considers that, as King, Louis is worthy of death.

So far, according to the spirit of the times, Camille is not illogical. It is the second part of his argument that posterity will scarcely accept.

He contends that Louis must also be punished as a criminal. True, he concedes, that, from some points of view, one cannot altogether compare him with Nero, but he accuses him in no measured terms of treason and of treason which puts him outside the law.



He ought, therefore, to be punished as an outlaw, and as one more culpable than the lowest brigand or robber, for, as Camille observes, one still finds honour amongst thieves.

Camille scoffs at the idea of there being any difficulty as to who should judge the King ; it is the sovereign people who must do this thing, through their representatives. They have arrogated to themselves the duty of judging others, therefore they can judge Louis Capet.

“ It is evident that the people have sent us here to judge the King, and to give them a Constitution.”

Camille concludes, in correct classical fashion, by comparing the Deputies of the Convention to the Consul Brutus, who did not shrink from condemning his own son to death. Shall they, the representatives of the people, prove themselves less worthy than he by hesitating to judge a far greater criminal ?

Camille did not pause here. His rancour against Louis was not yet satisfied. This “ Opinion ” of his is almost moderate in tone when we compare it with a motion he presented at this time to the National Convention.

The violence of his language on this occasion is quite indefensible, at least if we are to judge the men of that day by the ordinary rules which govern conduct amongst a civilised people.

Camille’s motion was as follows :—

“ The National Convention decrees that Louis Capet deserves to die. It decrees that the scaffold shall be erected in the Place de Carrousel, whither Louis shall be conducted, wearing on his breast these words : ‘ Perjurer and Traitor to the Nation,’ and on his back another label bearing the word ‘ King,’ in order to show the world that the degradation of nations cannot efface the crimes committed by royalty, even after the lapse of fifteen centuries ; it also decrees that the tomb of the Kings at St. Denis shall henceforth be the burial-place of thieves, murderers and traitors.”

Vindictiveness towards a fallen foe could scarcely go farther than this.

The long trial of the King came to an end at last. It now only remained for the members of the Convention to record their votes on three successive questions.

Firstly, whether Louis Capet was guilty or not guilty. On this count the verdict was unanimous, or practically so; with no dissentient voice the Convention made answer: "He is guilty."

With regard to the second question, whether there should be an appeal to the people or no, the Montagnard vote prevailed over that of the Girondins. There was a majority of two to one against the referendum.

On the following day, Wednesday, January 10th, the voting began on the last and most important question—what punishment?

It was not until eight o'clock in the evening that they actually began to vote, after a day spent in argument and debate as to what majority should be required to decide the matter. All through the dark hours of that winter night, all through the next day and night the voting continued. The seven hundred and forty-nine members of the Convention who were present mounted one by one to the Tribune and recorded their votes, sometimes accompanying their bare statement with a speech in explanation or vindication of their opinion.

From one of the galleries in the hall a group of painted, gaily dressed women, the friends of "Equality" Orléans, listened to the voting, with laughing comments on the grim ceremonial. They held little cards inscribed with the names of the deputies, and as these names were called and the vote was given, they pricked it off in one column or the other. Bets were interchanged between these women and the deputies and their friends, who came and went amongst them, bets as to whether Capet would eventually escape, as to how such and such a one would

vote. They ate oranges and sweetmeats whilst they waited—and the fate of a King hung in the balance.

All the world knows the final verdict—that verdict which the Girondin, Vergniaud, pronounced as President of the Convention, in a voice which, men said, sounded as though conscience-stricken.

“I declare, in the name of the Convention, that the punishment it pronounces on Louis Capet is that of death.”

Camille gave his vote in the terms which one would naturally expect after reading his “Opinion.” Yet he had but lately received a letter from his father in which M. Desmoulins gravely and solemnly warned his son against voting for the death of the King.

“If I were you, I should say,” writes the elder man, “‘I am a Republican in feeling and in act and have given proof of it. I was one of the first and most eager to denounce Louis XVI; and for these very reasons, I decline to vote.’”

In spite of this warning, Camille recorded his vote for death, and in no dubious phrases. These are the exact words which he used.

“Manuel, in his ‘Opinion’ of the month of November, said: ‘A King dead is not a man the less.’ I vote for death, perhaps too late for the honour of the National Convention.”

So on that bitter, frost-bound day at the end of January, the sacrifice which Camille had helped with all his powers to bring about was consummated. With no great show of stoicism—for he was never a romantic figure—but with a simple piety which was far better than any heroics, Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre, met his death.

To his son he left a noble testament—the command to forgive his own enemies and those of his father. The words which he would have spoken to his people were drowned in the roll of drums. In the pages of history Louis has inscribed his name, haltingly and unevenly, as a good man, but a bad king.



## V

**I**T was a bitter wind which directed the course of the self-named weathercock during those first nine months of 1793. Camille had been one of the instruments to slay the King. Now, he was to assist, with that cruel pen of his, in the downfall of a man, once his intimate friend, and of a party who, well directed, might have been the salvation of France.

We have already seen how the quarrel between Camille and Brissot began. The former had neither forgotten nor forgiven the injury which he considered himself to have sustained. He had given one retaliating thrust already, in the "Brissot Démasqué"; he only bided his time to wound his adversary yet more deeply.

Meantime, all Europe was stunned with horror at the news of the execution of Louis. No one had realised that the Convention would dare to go so far. No one had believed that the spirit must be taken literally which had inspired Danton with those terrible words:—

"The coalised Kings threaten us; we hurl at their feet, as a gage of battle, the head of a King!"

Monsieur, the Count of Provence, proclaimed himself regent for the boy-king, Louis XVII, on January 28th, and in the wording of this proclamation showed more than the usual Bourbon incapacity to learn wisdom. He stated that his desire and intention was to re-establish the old order of things, pure and

simple, and thereby did enormous harm to the royal cause.

There was a practically unanimous declaration of war from the European powers, a declaration which the new Republic accepted, nay, which, in more than one instance, she forestalled. And while the Armies of the Coalition threatened the northern and eastern frontiers of France, in the early spring of 1793 civil war broke out within her boundaries.

Royalist La Vendée had long been smouldering in rebellion, and the revolt broke into flame when the Convention endeavoured to enforce the great national levy of troops in this province.

It was on March 8th that all the external and internal troubles seemed to come to a climax. There was bad news from the frontier, where Dumouriez hesitated on the brink of treason; there was bad news from La Vendée, where the untrained Royalist troops were assuming a rough kind of organisation, under their own peasant leaders and a few impoverished seigneurs.

In Paris, the internal quarrels of the Convention were growing more and more persistent. When on this 8th of March Danton rose in the Assembly to plead that the representatives should cease from discord, should lay aside their quarrels and join in the defence of the Fatherland, he put into words a national necessity.

As usual Danton carried public opinion with him. On the Hôtel de Ville, the black flag proclaimed that the "Fatherland was in Danger!" and the sections sat in permanence to enrol recruits. The Girondins alone were uncertain and doubtful; they found it literally impossible to join whole-heartedly with the "Mountain." They temporised and waited, whilst the populace murmured against them.

Nevertheless, for the moment the indignation against Brissot and his party subsided, without resulting in open strife.

On March 10th the Convention took a very important step. It decreed, on Danton's motion, that: "There should be established in Paris a Criminal Tribunal extraordinary; which would deal with all counter-revolutionary undertakings, and all attempts upon the liberty, equality, unity and indivisibility of the Republic, the internal and external safety of the state and all conspiracies tending to re-establish Royalty, or to establish any other authority injurious to liberty, equality and the sovereignty of the people."

Thus was instituted the famous Revolutionary Tribunal, which exactly a year later was to arraign before its bar the very man who had caused it to be created. Revolutionary Tribunals had already existed, notably that one which had been formed to try those involved in the affair of August 10th, but these were merely temporary creations. This was the great Tribunal which was to become such a terrible and deadly weapon in the hands of the Committee of Public Safety.

It was on March 25th that this all-powerful Committee was formed. At first it was known as the Committee of General Defence, continuing the title of one which had been in existence since January 3rd, 1793. It consisted of twenty-five members, of whom Camille was one.

In this form the Committee executed nothing of particular interest. It only existed until April 5th, when it was dissolved and replaced by a Commission of Execution, which, on April 6th, took the name of the Committee of Public Safety. Under this name, although at various times reconstituted, the great Committee governed France to all intents and purposes until the establishment of the Directory.

There was an indirect thrust against Brissot and his party in a measure which was passed in the Convention on March 29th and which decreed that: "Whosoever should be convicted of having composed or printed



works or writings which might provoke the dissolution of the National Representation, the re-establishment of Royalty or of any other power injurious to the sovereignty of the people," should be found guilty of treason against the Nation.

Again on April 5th another decisive move was taken against the Girondins. The Jacobins, with Marat as President, signed a circular proclaiming the necessity of proscribing the Girondin Deputies as "traitors, Royalists and inept." This address was read from the Tribune of the Convention and signed by ninety-six members of the Mountain, amongst whom was Camille. Danton and Robespierre, however, declined to put their names to it.

The Girondins retaliated by proposing a decree of accusation against Marat, which they contrived to pass in the Assembly by a narrow majority, but although the "Friend of the People" was brought in consequence before the Revolutionary Tribunal, he was acquitted and carried back to the Convention in triumph by the populace. Here he behaved with considerable dignity and forbearance, and the Girondins could not but feel that their attack on the Mountain had most woefully miscarried. Instead of strengthening their position by this aggression they had enormously weakened it.

It was in May that Camille published his next and most virulent attack upon Brissot and his party, "L'Histoire des Brissotins" (Fragment de l'Histoire secrète de la Révolution).

Contemporary writers, who were also eye-witnesses of the events, such as Helen Maria Williams, seem to have accepted it as indisputable that the act of accusation against the Girondin deputies was mainly founded on this pamphlet of Camille's. He himself writes of it to his father, a little later, as "the manifesto, the precursor of the Revolution of May 31st," and there is little doubt but that it was the chief

instrument which brought about the fall of the Gironde. For those days the circulation of the pamphlet was immense, more than four thousand copies being sold.

In this work Camille pursued the same system of attack as in the "Brissot Démasqué." His object was to prove that the whole party of the Gironde was Royalist and anti-revolutionary in its tendencies, thereby discrediting them with the populace, and he was not particularly scrupulous as to the means he adopted to prove his unfounded assertions. For instance, he states that in September, 1792, a large proportion of the Convention was Royalist, meaning thereby the faction of the Gironde. This statement is obviously absurd, and he gives no further proof of this royalism than the "Implications of the Girondins against Paris." It is, of course, plain that Camille's sole object was to depict his enemies as "reactionaries" without giving any valid reasons for the accusation.

Speaking of Brissot, Pétion, Guadet, Gensonné, Raimond and others, he says: "Until these days it was held to be impossible to found a Republic except upon the virtues like the ancient legislators; but it has been the immortal glory of this society to create the Republic with vices."

Camille inveighed against Brissot and his associates with bitter sarcasm, using with deadly effect the weapon of his terrible wit. He urged that the Brissotins should be vomited forth from the Convention, and the Revolutionary Tribunal "amputated." Whilst the brilliance of the pamphlet is undeniable, this fact only made it the more dangerous: never had Camille written to worse effect in all his literary career than now, when he used his pen to bring about the destruction of those men, who, with all their faults, were amongst the purest patriots in France.

It is undoubted that this pamphlet of Camille's was written at the direct inspiration of Robespierre.

During the greater part of this year of 1793 all the work of the journalist was practically dictated by his friend and colleague, who made use of the medium of Camille's brilliant style to express his own subtle policy.

Robespierre's whole system of attack upon the Gironde in the Convention and at the Jacobins was a series of indeterminate accusations, of vague deductions, and of spiteful calumnies. This, as we have seen, was also the plan pursued by Camille in the "*Histoire des Brissotins*" with this difference, that his clear, incisive style gave a deceptive kind of lucidity to Robespierre's enigmatic and non-committal utterances.

At the same time, the fact that Camille was inspired in this and other instances by Robespierre does not shift the blame from the journalist's shoulders. He was a man, and as such responsible for his own actions, whether bad or the reverse. The question is, whether Camille himself acted in good faith by writing as he did, and here it would certainly be unfair to accuse him of intentional falsehood or even of insincerity. It is certain that there was a considerable amount of personal ill-feeling on his part, towards Brissot at any rate, but on the whole he probably believed that he was doing right in striving to bring about the downfall of the Girondins. It was a party question, and at that time party warfare was a cruel and remorseless business, where little mercy was shown, a fight veritably to the death.

Immediately on the publication of Camille's pamphlet followed the day of May 31st, when the Convention, overawed by the Commune, submitted ignominiously to the demands of the people of Paris, and, in cowardly fashion, delivered up the deputies of the Gironde.

At first Brissot and his colleagues were not imprisoned, but merely kept under supervision, and



debarred from taking their seats in the Convention. In consequence of this comparative freedom a number of the deputies, amongst whom were Buzot, Barbaroux, Louvet and Pétion, escaped from Paris and made their way to Normandy, there to stir up civil war.

As military leaders, however, the Girondins failed signally. They expected the people of the provinces to flock to their standard as soon as it was raised, but they were disappointed in this hope. Their general, Wimpfen, tried to prevail on them to join forces with the Royalist troops, but this proposal the staunch Republicans rejected with scorn. At the one pitched battle with the army of the Convention, at Vernon, the Girondin army rather dissolved than was defeated. The deputies began that sorrowful and hopeless flight through the autumnal countryside, which ended only in the death of most of them, killed by their own hands, by the guillotine—by the very dogs of the village.

In Paris the fate of the Girondin deputies was even more swift and certain. Camille carried his attack yet further in the “Adresse des Jacobins aux départements sur l’insurrection du 31 mai,” which appeared during the summer. Nevertheless, it is apparent in this pamphlet that the journalist did not feel entirely confident of himself. There is in it a distinct attempt to justify his course of action, to prove himself in the right, for his own satisfaction as much as for that of others, by appealing to the examples of the men of antiquity, and by a succession of quotations from Seneca, Plato and Sallust. It is plain enough that Camille already felt some twinges of remorse.

The misguided heroism of Charlotte Corday in her murder of Marat was the death-blow of the Girondin cause. As Vergniaud is reported to have said: “She has slain us, but she teaches us how to die.”

It was in this same month of July, which saw the death of Marat, that Camille for the first time found himself under suspicion of that deadly sin of “in-

civism " which formed the basis of so many accusations at that time.

It would appear that the young man had been somewhat remiss in his attendances at the Convention, where, indeed, Camille never felt himself in his element, and in consequence the deputy Bréard went so far as to accuse him of a connection with the aristocrats and of favouring their projects.

The real reason of the accusation, however, is to be traced to the suspicions aroused by Camille's bold and spirited defence of his friend Arthur Dillon at the beginning of this month of July. That brave soldier and fascinating man of the world had been imprisoned in the Madelonettes on July 11th and 12th upon the accusation of Couthon.

Dillon was almost openly a Royalist, he was the devoted adherent of Marie-Antoinette; an ill man to defend at that time. Nevertheless, Camille took up the case vehemently, and, what is more, carried it through successfully, although at the cost to himself of a stain upon his reputation as a true Republican. It was a luckless friendship, this of the brilliant Franco-Irishman for the journalist and his wife. The fact that Camille undertook his defence was, undoubtedly, the young man's first step downward from popular favour, and Dillon's well-meant but misguided actions later were to be made the pretext for the arrest and condemnation of Lucile.

Camille must have been very well aware of the danger which he ran by showing such active sympathy with a man accused of royalism. Probably he believed then and later that his own republicanism was above suspicion, that the people of Paris would always support their favourite, whatever he might do. However that may be, there is a letter extant from Dillon to his counsel which proves that the young man acted with real devotion and self-forgetfulness, and which besides throws a curious sidelight upon his

relationship to Fouquier-Tinville, the Public Prosecutor. Dillon writes from the prison of the Madelonnettes, a short time before his release.

“This tremendous business of mine,” he says, “now become so simple, thanks to your kindness, to your courage, and besides, and above all, to your fair-dealing, holds by only one thread which is frightfully elongated by the laziness of your cousin, Fouquier de Tinville. . . . only a word from your cousin is wanted.”

In an English journal of that date, the “Argus,” we find the following interesting commentary on Dillon’s relations with Camille and the ultimate result of the case. The extract is reprinted from the “Register of Occurrences” in Sampson Perry’s “Historical Sketch” :—

“A. Dillon possessed the friendship of several members of the Convention, among the rest that of Camille Desmoulins, who writ a Philippic against the Committee of Public Welfare almost entirely to vindicate Dillon’s conduct and to set forth his knowledge of his profession and to detail the services he had rendered France, proving that he would do it still by his counsels, if not by his sword. The effect of this well-written pamphlet, added to that of a large posting bill wherein he peremptorily demanded the Committee either to take his head or to give him his liberty, produced what he desired, and he was in a few days liberated from the Madelonnettes.”

There was perhaps a deeper reason than at first appears for Camille’s generous conduct in this matter. Evil tongues had been busy once again, hinting at something more than common friendship between Arthur Dillon and Lucile Desmoulins ; by his self-sacrificing defence of the elder man Camille could and did prove his faith in his wife in no uncertain fashion.

That he was aware of the rumours we know from his own writings ; and the manner in which he answered the infamous report may well be set down here :—

“‘Do you know Dillon well?’ Camille says that an acquaintance asked him.



“ ‘Of course I know him. Have I not got myself into a scrape for him, against his will ? ’ . . .

“ ‘Does your wife often see Dillon ? ’

“ ‘I don’t think she has seen him four times in her life.’ . . .

“ ‘Since you take it so philosophically, you must know that Dillon betrays you as well as the Republic. You are not a handsome fellow.’

“ ‘Far from it.’

“ ‘Your wife is charming, Dillon is still handsome, and women are so fickle.’

“ ‘Some at least.’

“ ‘I am sorry for you.’ . . .

“ ‘Let your friendship make its mind easy. I see plainly that you do not know my wife, and if Dillon betrays the Republic as he betrays me, I will answer for his innocence.’ ”

Camille’s taste may be questioned in publishing this conversation, imaginary or otherwise. What is unquestionable is his complete and unswerving faith in Lucile, as unquestionable as the fact that his young wife deserved that perfect trust.

After the accusation brought against him in the Convention, Camille was invited to submit his character to the scrutiny of the Jacobins. He passed through the ordeal successfully with the aid of Robespierre, and managed to clear himself for the time being.

But this was not the end of the matter. Camille immediately published what we should now call an “open” “Lettre au Général Dillon,” and this letter was full of expressions which almost pass belief in their unwisdom. It really would seem as though the journalist thought that he was privileged to say anything he pleased with impunity.

He spoke of Billaud-Varennes, a personality to be reckoned with at that time, and a man incredibly bitter and vindictive, as a coward, and as “the bilious patriot.”

Of Saint-Just, another member of the great Committee of Government, and the devoted friend of

Robespierre, he wrote in phrases which have become famous.

"After Legendre," says Camille, "the member of the Convention who has the highest opinion of himself is Saint-Just. One can see by his gait and bearing that he looks upon his own head as the corner-stone of the Revolution, for he carries it upon his shoulders with as much respect as if it were the sacred Host."

Neither Billaud nor Saint-Just ever forgot these pleasant jests. As we shall soon see, they were from henceforth among Camille's most bitter and unsparing enemies.

It would seem as though the journalist himself suspected that he had gone too far in his attacks on these extreme members of the Committee. Writing to his father on August 10th, he says:—

"I send you a pamphlet that I have just published (*"Lettre au Général Dillon"*). Its prodigious success for two days past makes me almost afraid, because I am not more resentful against myself. I must needs descend to the depths of my heart, in order to find there always the same patriotism as of old, that I may excuse myself in my own eyes when I see the aristocrats so delighted."

We possess two letters written by Camille to his father at this time. The first, dated July 9th, in which he boasts of the effect of his attack on Brissot, is mainly cheerful in tone. He complains, in mock seriousness, that he is compelled to write in his office, at the Hall of the Assembly, because at home Lucile always comes to look over his shoulder, to discover whether he is writing to Guise.

He tells his father, half seriously, half playfully, that his wife is plainly jealous of his family. She will not hear of paying a visit to his birthplace, even after peace shall have been declared. As Camille naïvely remarks in a passage already quoted, she is troubled by the remembrance of "some cousin of mine, who has been mentioned to her."

The contrast between this letter, with its revelations of Lucile's pretty jealousy, and that which he wrote to his father on August 10th is very marked. He speaks of a family sorrow, the news of which has just been sent to him, and his language is very tender and affectionate. We should perhaps say here that Camille's suggestion was perfectly correct. Séméry Desmoulins was in reality a prisoner, and was still living many years after the death of his father and elder brother.

"I am very grieved to hear of the death of my brother Séméry, slain in fighting for the fatherland," Camille writes. "I had no other certainty of a loss so afflicting for you except the indication of his long silence, and I seized with avidity upon your doubts as to his death. Is it not possible that you may still receive him from the hands of the enemy, who perhaps hold him a prisoner? I have realised every hour, in seeing my own son, how this blow must cut you to the heart. My wife and I have been much touched by the interest which you feel for this dear little child, whom we love so much that I have horrible fear of losing him. Life is made up of evil and good in equal proportions, and for some years evil has floated around me, so that it seems to me my turn to be submerged must come. . . . It has been said that in every country under an absolute government, the grand way to succeed is to be commonplace. I see that this may be true of a Republic. Of what importance is success to me? But I cannot bear the sight of all this accumulated injustice, ingratitude and wrong. Where can I be as obscure as I am now well known? Where is the asylum, the cellar where I may hide from all observation, with my wife, my child and my books? I cannot prevent myself from thinking unceasingly that these men who are executed in thousands have children, have fathers also. At least I have none of these murders with which to reproach myself, nor any of these wars against which I have always contended. . . . Farewell, I embrace you: take care of your health so that I may press you to my heart if I am to be suffered to outlive this revolution, although there are moments when I am tempted to seek death in La Vendée or on the frontiers to escape from the spectacle of so many ills. . . . It is true that



the state of things, such as it is, is incomparably better than four years ago, because there is a hope of amendment, a hope which cannot exist under a despotism of which the slaves are like the damned who have no more hope."

This letter, as a whole, speaks of discouragement, of a kind of vicarious remorse, as it were. Camille boasts that he need not reproach himself for these murders, and for these ills which afflict his country. He does not yet realise his personal responsibility, he is still blind to his own share in the evils which he sees so plainly. His eyes were soon to be rudely opened; in a moment of time he was to see himself revealed as the murderer of the men who had been his own familiar friends. It needed some such shock as this to rouse Camille to a sense of his own responsibilities.

It must necessarily seem to us very strange that loving, tender-hearted Lucile did not serve as a softening influence upon Camille at this worst and most violent period of his life.

The truth would seem to be that Lucile herself was an ardent little Republican and, in theory, quite ready to advocate extreme measures. There is an entry in her diary relative to Marie-Antoinette, where she describes in high-flown phrases what she would do in the place of the Queen "if fate had set me upon the Throne, if, having wrought the misery of my subjects, a certain death awaited me as the just punishment of my crimes."

There is a stoical pitilessness in Lucile's imaginings. "I would have a funeral pile erected and surrounded by barriers; and three days before my death I would have my intentions made known to the people. Within the enclosure and opposite the funeral pile I would have an altar erected. During those three days I would pray at the foot of the altar to the great Master of the Universe; the day of my death all my family should accompany me to the funeral pile in mourning."

Moreover, Lucile loved Camille with an intensity which blinded her to all his faults and shortcomings. Everything which her husband did or wrote doubtless seemed in her eyes to be right, and perfectly justifiable.

It was during the summer of 1793 that the "Terror" became a systematised method of government. There are two things to be remembered in this connection : firstly, that it was a definite system, and secondly, that it was not a system which was intended to be permanent. It is possible that Marie-Joseph Chénier, himself a Terrorist, gave at once the best apology and the best explanation for the Terroristic Government in the Council of Five Hundred, on the 27th Ventôse, Year IV.

"A monarchy fourteen centuries old," he said, "suddenly transformed into a Republic ; a war against half Europe ; a vast civil war in the interior of the country ; it must be allowed that these trifling circumstances might well justify certain temporary measures, which would be abandoned in the tranquillity of a happier time."

The atrocities which have made the Terror a synonym for unspeakable cruelty are ever to be deplored. But who can say that there was no method in that madness ?

The Terror, in Barère's sounding phrase, was indeed "on the Orders of the Day" from this time onward. The Queen had been executed on October 16th, the very day on which the armies of the Coalition were signally defeated at Wattignies by the raw Republican recruits, directed by the military genius of Carnot. Danton had retreated to his birthplace in the middle of the month, broken down in health after his enormous exertions. He had striven to heal the breach with the Girondins to his utmost. Now, in despair, he could only leave them to their fate.

On October 31st the trial of Brissot and his col-

leagues came to an end, and the death sentence was passed.

It is from this day that we must date the great change which came over Camille; the reaction then definitely set in which culminated in his appeal for clemency. For the first time he seems to have realised the power of the printed word, he saw in a tangible form the result of his own writings. A terrible truth was brought home to him; the truth that, as Mr. Philip Gibbs expresses it: "at that time in France an accusation was almost as good as a condemnation, and that a bitter jest led men to the guillotine."

Camille had shot his arrows of barbed wit recklessly, thinking, if he thought at all, that they would glance off without reaching a vital spot. He was to find now that they had reached their mark, that they had been only too well aimed; to paraphrase the poet, he was to find them "in the heart of a friend."

Vilate, in his Memoirs, of which there is no reason to doubt the authenticity, tells us how Camille bore himself at the trial of the Girondins. This passage has often been quoted, but it will bear repetition here:—

"I was seated with Camille Desmoulins on the bench placed before the table of the jury. When they returned from their deliberation, Camille advanced to speak to Antonelle, who came in one of the last. Surprised at the alteration in his face, Camille said to him, rather loud: 'I pity you; yours are terrible functions'; then, hearing the declaration of the jury, he threw himself into my arms in distress and agony of mind: 'Oh, my God, my God! It is I who kill them! My "Brissot Unmasked"! Oh, my God, this has destroyed them!' As the accused returned to hear their sentence all eyes were turned on them; the most profound silence reigned throughout the hall: the public prosecutor concluded with the sentence of death. The unfortunate Camille, fainting, losing his consciousness, faltered out these words: 'I am going, I am going, I must go out!' He could not."

It would almost appear as though Camille had not



thought it possible that the Girondins would be condemned to death. Otherwise, he surely would not have been present at the trial, unless it was a terrible fascination which dragged him there to hear the end, whatever that might be.

This day marks the close of the third phase of Camille's life, that short, worse period, when it seems as though he were indeed driven by the bitter fury of the easterly blast. Now the wind has changed and for the last time. From henceforth Camille, although often feebly and with hesitation, will yield himself to a gentler influence ; we shall hear his voice raised now in a new appeal which sounded strange and foreign in those days—the appeal for clemency.



PART FOUR  
THE SOUTH WIND



“Thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth  
by the South Wind.”

*Job xxxvii. 17.*

# I

**I**T would be making an arbitrary statement and one neither consistent with the facts nor with human nature to say that the condemnation of the Girondin deputies was a definite turning-point in Camille's life. All that one can affirm is that, roughly, it marks the end of a phase, and that it is only after this date that he gives the first tangible proofs of a change of policy.

It would be incorrect, however, to pretend that this change came about suddenly. In the passages quoted from Camille's letters to his father during the summer of 1793 we have already seen that he was uneasy and depressed, doubtful as to what would be the upshot of the conflict which was raging in France. It was not that his views had changed with regard to the Revolution itself; it was not that he had become any the less a Republican, but there was stirring within him a feeling of pity and remorse for the bloodshed which he had helped to bring about. He had begun to ask himself that question which later in the year he was to cry so loudly in the streets: "Could not the Republic vanquish as surely by clemency as by the sword?"

The trial of the Girondins, as we have said before, brought home to him his own personal responsibility; that is really what it amounts to.

There is a story which has been repeated again and again in many forms, and with so many poetical embellishments that it seems to us now more like the work of a writer of fiction than a relation of plain facts. Yet M. Jules Claretie, in his book on the

Dantonists, vouches for its truth, and asserts that he heard the story from an unimpeachable authority. It is his version accordingly which shall be given here.

Some time during the summer of 1793, before Danton's retirement to Arcis-sur-Aube, he and Camille were returning homewards one evening after the session of the Convention. When they came to the Quai des Lunettes it was near the hour of sunset, and the crimson light of the sky was reflected in the river beneath. Danton paused to gaze at the strange unearthly glow, then turning to his companion with a shudder, he said :

“Look, see how much blood ! The Seine runs blood. Ah, too much blood has been spilt ! Come, take up your pen again ; write and demand clemency—I will support you.”

It is not difficult to accept this story as true ; the words which Danton is reported to have spoken are in no way inconsistent with his character, framed as it was on large lines, both for good and evil. He expressed the feeling which was growing in him and Camille alike—a feeling of dissatisfaction, of revulsion against the present order of things. A presentiment of evil plainly shadowed the thoughts of the younger man as the autumn and winter drew on. At first it appeared in him as a kind of mental oppression. As he said to his father : “It seems to me my turn to be engulfed must come soon.”

Later it was to take a more definite form. Camille's forebodings during the winter and early spring of 1794 were no question of the imagination. To his honour be it spoken that he was then definitely adhering to a course which he could scarcely have doubted might lead him to the guillotine.

It was after the downfall of the Gironde, late in the autumn of 1793, that Camille, as he says himself in the first number of the “Vieux Cordelier,” left his fireside to take up once more the pen of a journalist.



He little knew at the outset to what goal this short campaign was to lead him.

In Danton's absence it is plain that Robespierre had reassumed even more than his old influence over Camille. There is very little doubt that the first conception of the new journal came from him, and there is practically no question but that Camille thought that his old comrade would support him in his later appeal for clemency. He certainly assumed that this was the case until Robespierre himself destroyed his illusions.

It is well that this should be plainly understood from the beginning. The demand for a Committee of Clemency was not the solitary cry from Camille which some historians have represented it. He understood himself to be voicing a policy, and that the policy of one of the most powerful and popular men in France. Moreover, we have no reason to question the fact that, in the depths of his heart, Robespierre himself was in very truth inclined to merciful measures. Many things would seem to prove it. If the Committee of Public Safety, if the universal demand of the people had supported Camille's proposal, Robespierre would doubtless have come forward in person and upheld it with all his strength.

But . . . he was afraid. Afraid that he might lose his popularity and prestige, afraid for his own personal safety; that was the difficulty. He was not sure that the people would support him, not confident that he could carry the thing through. Eventually, when the Committee, where Robespierre was not all-powerful, demanded the arrest of Danton and his adherents, he was fearful of the consequences of opposition on his part. As far as Danton was concerned, there is little doubt that he wished him out of the way. As for Camille—well, it was wiser even to give up his friend than to risk the loss of his own popularity.

It amounts to this, then. Camille's real bravery

consisted not so much in the initial publication of the "Vieux Cordelier" as in his refusal to retract what he had written when he discovered that Robespierre was against him, at least outwardly, and that the Jacobins thirsted for his blood.

In the meantime Robespierre made use of Camille as his tool, so long as it served his purpose. When he found that he was cutting his own hands, he cast the tool aside.

The incorruptible Maximilian had no journalistic powers. He could on occasion move men by his speeches, that is abundantly evident, but in this case oratory was not sufficient. Besides, Robespierre was probably a little doubtful as to the wisdom of making speeches at the Jacobins or the Cordeliers in support of the movement which he wished now to set on foot, the movement against the "ultras," the "enragés"—Hébert, of the "Père Duchesne" and his party. It must be remembered that they were still strong in the clubs—it might be dangerous to inveigh against them too unwarily and rashly.

The pen of the most brilliant journalist in France would be invaluable to aid in Robespierre's plans; that pen was at his service. If Camille was a little unwise—a trifle outspoken—well, Robespierre could not be held responsible for all that his young colleague might do or say.

It must have seemed to Camille that he had never started a journal under brighter auspices. His own popularity as a writer was an assured thing, he was backed by one of the most prominent men in the Republic, and the policy laid out for him to pursue accorded thoroughly with his own inclinations. He could follow the advice of Danton, that other friend of his, he could preach a gospel of Clemency, could put into words all those doubts and misgivings as to the policy of "Terror" which had been haunting him for months past.

Danton, indeed, on returning to Paris after his retirement at Arcis, had already expressed these doubts at a sitting of the Jacobins on December 3rd. He demanded that the members should "defy those who would carry the people beyond the bounds of the Revolution and who proposed ultra-revolutionary measures." These words of Danton's were very badly received, and it was only after Robespierre himself had risen to defend his colleague against the charge of "lukewarmness" which was brought against him that the murmurs were stilled for the time being.

The very name of the new journal was directed against the "ultras." This was to be the organ of the "Old Cordeliers," the founders of the famous club, whom Camille himself and Danton especially represented. They had little in common with the "new" Cordeliers of the school of "Père Duchesne" and Chaumette.

The first number of the paper appeared on December 5th (Quintidi frimaire 2nd Décade, according to the new calendar). It was described on the cover as being edited by Camille Desmoulins, "député de la Convention, doyen des Jacobins," and it was headed in large type: "Vivre Libre ou Mourir!"

This number bore as a motto the words of Machiavelli: "As soon as those who govern are hated, their rivals will begin to be admired."

Camille at once strikes the note which he was to follow up on an ascending scale all through the succeeding issues. It is the same note which he had first struck, years before, in the "Discours de la Lanterne," the accusation that the counter-revolutionary party were endeavouring to disgust the populace with the Republic by encouraging licence and extreme measures. What Camille said then, at the very beginning of his literary career, he says again now. He congratulates Pitt upon a new system of tactics. He will then overthrow the Revolution now, not by



means of the "moderates," but through the "ultras." This is the keynote of the whole number. The danger is imminent, Camille says, the more so that it is insidious and unperceived save by very keen observers, who have abundant leisure to note the signs of the times.

"It is necessary to write," Camille cries. "It is necessary for me to cast aside the slow-moving pencil of the History of the Revolution which I was composing in the chimney-corner, to take up again the rapid and breathless pen of the journalist and to follow with loose bridle the revolutionary torrent. Consulting deputy, whom no one has consulted since June 3rd, I emerge from my office and from my arm-chair, where I have had sufficient leisure to enable me to follow in detail the new system of our enemies, which Robespierre has only presented to you in the mass, and which his multifarious occupations at the Committee of Public Safety have not permitted him to embrace, like me, in its entirety. . . . We have no longer any journal which speaks the truth—at least the whole truth. I re-enter the arena with all the frankness and the courage which I possess."

Underneath all this we see very plainly the working of the mind of Robespierre, and, if it was needed, we have still further proof of Camille's source of inspiration in the journalist's own words after the publication of the first number, in which he refers to Robespierre's defence of Danton at the Jacobins.

"Victory is with us," he writes, "because amid the ruins of so many colossal civic reputations, Robespierre's is unassailed, because he lent a hand to our competitor in patriotism, our perpetual president of the 'Ancien Cordeliers,' our Horatius Cocles, who alone held the bridge against Lafayette and his four thousand Parisians."

It is evident from these words that Camille considered Robespierre to be openly allied in policy with himself and Danton. Nevertheless the great man was not wholly satisfied with the first number of the new journal. Certainly it was a pronounced popular



success, but such men as Couthon, St. Just and Billaud-Varennes, all of them Camille's bitter personal enemies, looked upon it as distinctly and unmistakably retrograde in character. Accordingly Robespierre requested Camille to submit to his revision the proofs of the further issues before they were printed.

The second number of the "Vieux Cordelier" appeared upon December 10th (20th frimaire). It would appear that Robespierre had corrected the proofs to good purpose, since the evidences of his influence are even more plainly traceable than before.

The number practically consisted entirely of a most violent diatribe against Chaumette, Cloutz and their party, and it probably contributed very materially to their downfall and execution. Now these men undoubtedly stood in the path of Robespierre. They were the initiators of the cult of "Reason," a cult which was entirely opposed to all Robespierre's views, deist as he was both by policy and by conviction. The Institution of the religion of the Supreme Being was doubtless already a fixed purpose in his clear, narrow mind ; he had before this date made use in the tribune of Voltaire's famous words : " Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer." All these cults must be cleared away to make a space on which to erect his new Theology, a theology where he, Maximilian Robespierre, had his place as high priest.

The opinions expressed in this second number of the "Vieux Cordelier" with regard to the worship of Reason are undoubtedly Robespierre's, and not to be taken as Camille's own. The latter, with all his faults, could never be accused of that of bigotry ; probably if left to himself he would have allowed the followers of the cult of Reason to pursue their own devices unmolested.

But when he again attacks the "enragés" in this number Camille is entirely in his element. This is his own theory ; he is always prepared to work it out

anew, with ever fresh and more ingenious developments and illustrations.

“There remained for our enemies no other resources than those which the Senate of Rome adopted, when, seeing the poor success of all their attacks against the Gracchi, they resolved upon the following expedient to overthrow the patriots. This was to engage a tribune to exaggerate everything that Gracchus proposed, and whenever he brought forward a popular measure to advance one more popular still, to the end that principles and patriotism might be killed by principles and patriotism pushed to extravagance. If the Jacobin Gracchus proposed the repeopling and the partition of the land of two or three conquered towns, the heretofore Feuillant Drusus proposed to divide twelve. Gracchus fixed the price of bread at sixteen sous, Drusus put the maximum at eight sous. This succeeded so well that, in a little while, the people of the Forum, finding that Gracchus was no longer the most advanced, and that Drusus outstripped him, cooled towards their true defender, who, once unpopular, was overwhelmed by the aristocrat Scipio Nasica in the first moral insurrection.”

Camille, it must be confessed, made extraordinarily adroit use of these illustrations and analogies from Greek and Roman history. Doubtless he occasionally distorted the facts to suit his own purpose, but on the whole he made a legitimate application of them, and displayed both ingenuity and a very wide knowledge of his subject.

Nevertheless in spite of its wit and adroitness Camille's attack upon Anarcharsis Cloutz in this number of the journal was both cruel and unwarrantable. The visionary Prussian, scarcely sane though he might be and full of wild schemes and visions, was, notwithstanding, a high-minded and high-principled man. His self-assumed title of “orator of the Human Race” was not adopted in any light spirit, and he most certainly did not deserve the epithet of “Hypocrite of Patriotism” which Camille applied to him and to his colleagues.

This whole number is a relapse on the part of the journalist into his worst faults. The methods adopted in it, undoubtedly inspired by Robespierre as they were, savour too much of the "Brissot Démasqué." There is the same system of trumped-up charges, of veiled innuendoes intended to discredit their subject and succeeding only too well.

"Clootz is a Prussian ; he is cousin-german of that Proly, who has been denounced so many times. . . .

"He worked for the 'Gazette Universale,' at which time he made war upon patriots, I believe, on the occasion of the 'Champ-de-Mars.'

"Guadet and Vergniaud were his sponsors, and caused him to be naturalised as a French citizen, by a decree of the Legislative Assembly."

It is with suggestions like these that Camille nourished the suspicions of his readers. In the concluding paragraph of this number he sets forth the accusation in clear and unmistakable terms.

"Anarcharsis and Anaxagoras (Chaumette) seem to believe themselves to be pushing the wheel of reason, whilst it is in reality that of counter-revolution ; and soon, instead of allowing Catholicism to die in France of old age and inanition, ready as it is to give up the ghost without procuring any advantage for our enemies, since the treasure of the sacristies will not escape Cambon, by persecution and intolerance of those who wish to continue their masses, I will answer for it that you will ensure strong constitutional reinforcements for Lescure and La Rochejacquelein."

While Camille was busy with the publication of the first two numbers of his paper, his enemies had not been idle. It appears that the journalist's emotion and self-reproach at the trial of the Girondins had not passed unnoticed ; it was on these grounds that he was accused at the Jacobins on December 1st. However, for the moment the accusation went no further, and Camille awaited his turn of "purification."

This ceremony was instituted by the Jacobins and



Cordeliers at this time, chiefly at the instigation of Robespierre. Turn by turn those who were accused of "slackness" or "lukewarmness" in the service of the Republic, or who were supposed to be tainted with the deadly sin of "incivism," were allowed to present themselves before the assembled members of the club and to set forth their defence, purging themselves, if possible, of the crimes of which they were accused. If the assembly judged them innocent, on their own showing, they were received back into full membership, and considered to be rehabilitated in the eyes of their fellows. If, on the contrary, they could not disprove the accusations brought against them, they were expelled from the club, and such expulsion was nearly always followed by a definite accusation made to the Revolutionary Tribunal. Unless the culprit was fortunate enough to make good his escape, he was almost invariably arrested and brought to trial—a trial which rarely ended in any other sentence than that of death.

Two days after the appearance of Camille's second number, Anarcharsis Clootz was called to the bar of the Jacobins, and his name erased from the list of membership of the Club, after a violent speech delivered by Robespierre. The orator repeated almost word for word the accusations which had been brought against Clootz in the "Vieux Cordelier" by Camille, or rather by Robespierre himself.

At the sitting of the Jacobins on the following afternoon Camille was called upon to "purify" himself. As before, his incriminating behaviour at the trial of Brissot and his colleagues was the subject of the accusation. Why, the journalist was asked, had he expressed pity and regret at the condemnation of these enemies of his country? Besides this, an explanation was demanded from him of his conduct with regard to the defence of Arthur Dillon, and the attitude which he had taken up in the published "Lettre au Général Dillon" was severely blamed.



As far as can be judged from the printed reports of this session, Camille defended himself with considerable courage and dignity against the implication that he was lacking in patriotism.

"I believed Dillon to be brave and useful," he said, "and therefore I defended him. As to the Girondins, I was in an extraordinary position with regard to them. I have always loved and served the Republic : but I have often been deceived respecting those who served it ; I adored Mirabeau, I esteemed Barnave and the Lameths ; I confess it ; but I sacrificed my friendship and my admiration as soon as I realised that they had ceased to be Jacobins. A marked fatality has ordained that of the sixty revolutionaries who signed my marriage contract, only two friends remain to me now, Danton and Robespierre. All the others have emigrated or are guillotined. Of this number were seven of the twenty-two. A movement of emotion was surely very pardonable in me on this occasion. Notwithstanding, I swear that I did not say : 'They die as republicans, like Brutus,' but I said : 'They die as republicans, but as federalist republicans,' because I do not believe that there were any Royalists amongst them."

Camille's speech appears to have had its effect. Moreover, he was still popular with the majority of the members of the Club.

"Camille has been unlucky in his choice of friends," cried one of the Jacobins present. "Let us prove to him that we know how to choose ours better, by welcoming him warmly."

Robespierre himself rose to defend his young colleague, although one cannot help thinking that the excuses which he brought forward must have been almost as galling to touchy, hot-tempered Camille as the previous accusations had been. Robespierre apologised for his friend on the score of what he called his "weaknesses."

"He is easily led and over-confident," he said ; "but he has always been a Republican. He loved Mirabeau, Lameth, Dillon ; but he has himself broken his idols when he found

that he had been deceived. I adjure him to pursue his career with confidence, but to be more reserved in the future, and to endeavour not to be deceived with regard to the men who play a great part upon the political stage."

This was the attitude which Robespierre constantly took up towards Camille and his conduct, and which the latter was to resent in the end to his cost. He treated the younger man as a spoilt boy, scarcely responsible for his actions, whom one must not take too seriously.

At this time Robespierre's word was law at the Jacobins, and the accusation against the journalist was withdrawn amidst acclamations.

Nevertheless the slight suspicions which Camille had brought upon himself in the summer by his attitude with regard to Dillon were perceptibly increased. The extreme party no longer looked upon him as an untainted patriot. This feeling of uneasiness respecting him had been still further accentuated by his defence of Philippeaux.

This honest and upright Republican had lately returned from the Vendéan provinces, enraged, partly from political, partly from personal motives, against the general staff of the Conventional Army at Saumur, which included Ronsin, Rossignol and others of the most advanced party. On the 18th Nivôse Philippeaux made a vehement speech at the Convention, in which he denounced the cruelties practised by the Republican generals, and demanded mercy for the Vendéans.

Not content with the storm of opposition which he raised against himself, both within and without the Hall of the Assembly, Philippeaux then published a pamphlet which attracted a great deal of attention. In this he repeated his accusations against the commanders in La Vendée, with additions, and accused Ronsin in particular of the most pronounced treason.

Camille up to this time appears to have known little or nothing of Philippeaux, but he found himself entirely in agreement with the writer's views. The

“enragés” in La Vendée then were as bad as those in Paris—that was just what might have been expected. The journalist admired Philippeaux’s courage and frankness without taking into consideration that, to a certain extent, he was blinded by personal animosity. Camille praised the pamphlet openly on every occasion, and the commendation of one of the most brilliant writers in Paris naturally helped materially to popularise Philippeaux’s philippic, at least in the capital.

On December 15th, two days after Camille had temporarily cleared his character at the Jacobins, the third number of the “Vieux Cordelier” was published, that famous third number which brought down upon the head of its author the wrath of the Jacobins, and which forced Robespierre to abjure his former disciple from fear of possible consequences.

It is in these third and fourth numbers of the new journal that Camille accomplished his greatest work, both in a literary and in a moral sense. Had they never been written, he would be remembered as a brilliant journalist, whose pen served some good and many bad purposes, and his personality must always have been interesting to students of history and human nature. But, nevertheless, his career would not have merited any very serious attention; he would indeed have appeared only as the weathercock of the Revolution, an indicator of varying winds, but without objective force of his own.

By the publication of these two issues of the “Vieux Cordelier” Camille set himself upon an altogether different plane. Hitherto he had worked for his own reputation’s sake, to express his own views, or those of the men who influenced him at the time; now he was labouring to save the lives of others and to touch the hearts of the people that they might join in his appeal for mercy.

In this famous Number Three Camille adopted a



simple, but extraordinarily effective method. It is the most masterly example of his adaptation of history to suit his purposes. Whilst affecting to give only a translation from Tacitus, he makes a determined and powerful attack upon the Terrorist "Law of Suspects."

Camille may, as he says, have intended merely to convey a warning, but the picture was too exact to be otherwise than a deadly offence against the Committee of Public Safety and the "ultras." Never was there a more scathing satire, and its absolute and undeniable truth made it the more unanswerable and enraging. For the simile is only too exact: the law of "suspect" of Tacitus is no more than a prototype of that which had been decreed in Paris.

The writer claims in this very number that he is shielded by the law of the liberty of the Press, and he dares any man to assert that one may not write as freely in France as in England. Camille was mistaken; he had gone too far.

In order that Camille may be fairly judged, it will be necessary to quote freely from this work of his, but an apology for doing so is scarcely needed. He explains the method which he adopted as follows:—

"Since the Republic and the Monarchy are even now engaged in a war to the death, which must inevitably end in a bloody victory for one or the other, who would deplore the triumph of the Republic after having read the description which history has left to us of the triumph of a Monarchy, after having thrown a glance upon the rough and unpolished copy of the picture of Tacitus which I am going to present to the honourable circle of my subscribers?"

So far, so good; it was in that same "rough and unpolished copy of Tacitus" that the sting of Camille's satire lay. It is only necessary to read the extracts which follow:—

"Augustus was the first to extend the law of lèse-majesté, in which he comprised writings which he called counter-revolutionary. . . . As soon as words had become state crimes,

it was only a step to transform into offences mere glances, sorrow, compassion, sighs, silence even.

“ ‘ Soon it was the crime of *lèse-majesté* or of counter-revolution in the town of Nursia to have raised a monument to its citizens, slain at the siege of Modena when fighting under Augustus himself, because at that time Augustus fought upon the side of Brutus. . . .

“ ‘ Crime of counter-revolution in the mother of the consul Fusius Geminus, to have wept over the mournful death of her son. It was necessary to display joy at the death of a friend, or of a relation if one did not wish to run the risk of perishing oneself. . . . Everything gave offence to the tyrants. Was a citizen popular ? He was then a rival to the prince, and doubtless wished to stir up a civil war : *Studia civium in se verteret et si multi idem audeant, bellum esse*. Suspect.

“ ‘ If, on the contrary, a man fled from popularity and hid himself in his own chimney-corner ; this retired life made him remarkable, gave rise to consideration : *Quanto metu occultior, tanto famæ adeptus*. Suspect.

“ ‘ Were you rich ? There was imminent peril that the people would be corrupted by your gifts : *Auri vim atque opes Plauti principi infensas*. Suspect.

“ ‘ Were you poor ? Hold ! Invincible Emperor, it is necessary to watch this man very closely. Nobody is so enterprising as he who has nothing. *Syllam inopem, undé precipuam audaciam*. Suspect.

“ ‘ Were you of a sombre and melancholy character, neglecting your appearance ; doubtless that which grieved you was the prosperous state of public affairs. *Hominem bonis publicis moestum*. Suspect.

“ ‘ If, on the contrary, a citizen gave himself over to revelling and feasting, he diverted himself because the Emperor had had that attack of gout which happily came to nothing ; it was necessary to make him feel that his Majesty was still in the full vigour of his age. *Reddendam pro intempestiva licentia moestum et funebrem noctum qua sentiat vivere Vitellium et imperare*. Suspect.

“ ‘ Was he virtuous and austere in his manners ; good ! A new Brutus who affects by his pallor and his cropped hair to censure an amiable and well-curled court. *Gliscere æmulos Brutorum vultus rigidi et tristis quo tibi lasciviam exproberent*. Suspect.

“ ‘ Was he a philosopher, an orator, or a poet ? It might happen that he would gain more renown than those who governed ! Could one allow more attention to be paid to an author on a fourth floor, than to the Emperor in his iron-barred palace ? *Virginum et Rufum claritudo nominis*. Suspect.

“ ‘ Finally, if a man had acquired a reputation in the wars, he was only the more dangerous by reason of his talents. . . . The best way is to get rid of him. At least, my lord, can you not dispense with his services, and withdraw him promptly from the army ? *Multa militari fama metum fecerat*. Suspect.

“ ‘ One might well believe that it was a very bad thing to be the grandson or otherwise related to Augustus ; one might some day be supposed to have pretensions to the throne. *Nobis et quod tunc spectaretur e Cæsarum posteris !* Suspect.’ ”

Afterwards at considerable length Camille develops his argument that the counter-revolution (embodied in the person of “ Pitt ”) is working by means of the ultra-revolutionaries. Towards the end of the number he boldly acknowledges his consciousness of the parallel which he has drawn.

“ It is undoubted that in this Number Three and in my translation from Tacitus, malignity will find some resemblance between these deplorable times and our own. I know it well, and I have armed myself with my pen for the sole purpose of striving to put an end to these resemblances, so that liberty may no more appear like despotism. . . . I make no pretence of pointing out anybody in particular in this number. . . . Let those men hasten to correct their conduct who, in reading these living pictures of tyranny, find there some likeness to themselves ; because it is impossible to persuade oneself that the portrait of a tyrant, drawn by the hand of the greatest painter of antiquity, and by the historian of philosophers, can now have become the portrait, taken from nature, of Cato or of Brutus, and that this which Tacitus called despotism and the worst of governments sixteen centuries ago, can to-day be called liberty and the best of all possible worlds.”

In order that one may grasp the full aptness of Camille’s satire, it is as well to compare with his translation from Tacitus the literal text of the



Terrorist law of "suspect" as stated by Chaumette in one of the sittings of the Commune of Paris on October 12th, 1793.

"Those should be regarded as suspected," he said on that occasion, "(1) who, in the assemblies of the people, arrest their energy by astute discourses, by turbulent cries and by menaces.

"(2) Those who, more prudent, speak mysteriously of the misfortunes of the Republic, deplore the fate of the people, and are always ready to spread bad news with affected sorrow.

"(3) Those who have changed their conduct and their language according to events; who, mute as to the crimes of royalists and of federalists, declaim with emphasis against the light faults of patriots, or affect, to appear republican, an austerity, a studied severity. . . .

"Those who have not taken any active part in the Revolution, and who, to exculpate themselves, think to atone by the value of their patriotic gifts, for their non-payment of contributions.

"Those who have received with indifference the Republican Constitution, and those who have expressed false fears upon its establishment and its duration.

"Those who, having done nothing against liberty, have also done nothing for her.

"Those who neglect to go to their sections, and who give for excuse that they do not know how to speak, or that their affairs detain them."

Can one wonder at the indignation of the Jacobins? Camille, as usual, had chosen the most effective weapon at his disposal. In this case, nothing could wound more deeply or more dangerously than the plain and practically unvarnished truth.

## II

THE appearance of the third number of the "Vieux Cordelier" caused an immense sensation in Paris, and, indeed, throughout France. It is said that some fifty thousand copies each were sold of the third and fourth issues of the paper.

As Camille himself had foreseen, the Royalists made great capital out of the attitude which he had taken up in "No. 3." The journalist might protest as much as he pleased against a misconception of his policy on the part of the counter-revolutionaries, but the fact remains—to his credit—that he had undoubtedly helped their cause. M. Louis Blanc, from the point of view of an extreme Republican, of course regrets Camille's course of action, but he estimates the situation, on the whole, very justly.

"The publication of this third number upon the 15th December," he writes, "was the signal for an immense scandal. All the counter-revolutionaries clapped their hands, all hastened to spread the news abroad that Camille Desmoulins had traced the history of his own epoch; against his will, the generous but rash writer had, in giving hope to the innocent, served the calculations of hatred."

Camille had indeed "given hope to the innocent." His journal was read even in the prisons, where those incarcerated saw, for the first time, a glimmer of hope, a possibility of justice, if not of mercy. One can only appreciate their incredulous joy at this changed attitude of Camille's by remembering that hitherto he had been looked upon as one of the most extreme of the Revolutionary journalists. Letters came to him from

prisoners and their friends or relations in all parts of France; one can fancy that he—not lacking in a sense of humour—read these epistles with somewhat mixed feelings.

Nor had there been wanting direct results from the publication of the third number. M. Aulard tells us, in his "Political History of the French Revolution," that, upon December 20th, a deputation of women came to the bar of the Convention, demanding with tears the liberation of their imprisoned relatives. The deputies were moved to pity, and it was decreed that the two Government Committees should appoint a Committee of Justice to "look into the means of setting at liberty such patriots as might have been imprisoned."

Here was a definite outcome of Camille's appeal: here was the "Committee of Clemency" which he demanded in actual process of formation. But it was not to be. Robespierre was beginning to dread the loss of his power. He feared that such a step as this would unduly increase the influence of the Dantonists, and he accordingly induced the Convention to revoke the decree which established this Committee of Justice.

Michelet apparently believes that it was upon December 13th that this deputation of women appeared at the Convention, that is, before the third number of the "Vieux Cordelier" was published. However, in this instance, there can be little or no doubt that the date given by M. Aulard is correct.

Camille did not hesitate to temporise now that he had definitely adopted a policy. The next issue of his paper appeared upon December 20th, only five days after the appearance of the last number. As regards the extraordinary reception which this Number Four received, we cannot do better than quote Michelet's eloquent words.

"Upon the 21st of December," he says, "early in the morning a long queue of purchasers gathered at the door of the book-



seller, Desenne, who fought with each other for the possession of the fourth number. They paid for it at second hand, at third hand, the price rose always, until it reached as much as a louis for one copy. People read it in the streets in their impatience, choked with tears. From the very heart of France had burst forth the voice of humanity, of blind, impatient, all-powerful pity, that voice of compassion which pierces through walls, which beats down strong fortresses . . . the clarion cry which will touch all souls for ever, the demand for a 'Committee of Clemency !' "

In a few vivid words the great historian gives us here a pathetic picture of that impatient frenzied crowd, waiting in the bleak cold of the dark winter's morning for the flimsy news-sheets which bore the words of hope to thousands. For Camille Desmoulins had not disappointed that host of subscribers. If he had gone far in number three of the "Vieux Cordelier," he went still further in the fourth issue ; his appeal for mercy rang out clearly this time, and with no hint of uncertainty.

It is quite plain that Camille still believed that Robespierre would support him. He says so, in fact, in a manner which allows of no misconception.

"Oh, my dear Robespierre," he writes in this same fourth number ". . . oh, my old college comrade, dost thou not remember those lessons of history and philosophy in which we learnt that love is more strong and more durable than fear ? . . . You have already come close to this idea."

These words must have been very bitter to Robespierre a little later, when his one thought was to dissociate himself from Camille and his policy by every means in his power.

This number four is headed by a quotation from J. J. Rousseau's "Contrat Social": "Le plus fort n'est jamais assez fort pour être toujours le maître, s'il ne transforme sa force en droit."

At the very beginning Camille defends himself

stoutly against the charges of unpatriotism which have been brought against him.

“Many people have disapproved of my No. 3, in which I have been pleased, they say, to make comparisons which tend to throw the Republic and patriots into disfavour: they ought, however, to say the excess of the Revolution and the patriot-adventurers.”

Camille goes on to protest against those who assert that Liberty must needs pass through a stormy and troublous childhood. According to him, she is born full-grown and should at once bring in her train all peace and happiness. Let us destroy our enemies by all means, he cries, but do not let us go further and kill all those harmless lookers-on, the people who are merely carried away by the impulse of the moment, or by the power of an orator.

“No, this Liberty descended from Heaven is not a nymph of the Opera, not a red cap, a dirty shirt, or rags and tatters. Liberty is happiness, reason, equality; she is justice, she is embodied in the Declaration of Rights, in your sublime Constitution! Do you wish me to recognise her, to fall at her feet, to shed my blood in her service? Open the doors of the prisons to those two hundred thousand citizens whom you call ‘suspects’; because in the Declaration of Rights there is no house of suspicion, there are only houses of detention; there are no suspected persons, only those convicted of crimes fixed by the law. And do not believe that this measure would be harmful to the Republic. It would be the most Revolutionary measure that you could possibly take. You think to exterminate all your enemies by means of the guillotine! But could there possibly be greater folly? Can you kill one person upon the scaffold without making for yourself ten more enemies amongst his family or his friends?”

Camille then goes on to develop his argument further. He lays stress on the fact that the unfortunates who crowd the prisons of Paris are not worthy of the mighty anger of the Republic; they are only women, children, old men, the sick and the cowardly—

capable neither of much good nor of much evil. It were far better to leave them to sit harmlessly in their chimney corners.

Then the journalist strikes a graver note. These constant executions, he says, are demoralising to the people of Paris: they constitute a serious danger to the State. "It is not love for the Republic which draws all the world daily to the Place de la Révolution, but curiosity and the anticipation of that unique drama which can have but one single representation. I am sure that the greater number of those who habitually view this spectacle, in the depths of their hearts mock at their neighbours who, at the opera or at a tragedy see only a pasteboard sword, and comedians who do but simulate death. Such, says Tacitus, was the insensibility of the city of Rome, its unnatural security, and its perfect indifference towards the fate of all parties alike."

And now followed that famous passage which was to prove Camille's death warrant in very truth, a passage which is best to be appreciated in its original language.

"Je peux bien différemment de ceux qui vous disent qu'il faut laisser la terreur à l'ordre du jour. Je suis certain, au contraire, que la liberté serait consolidée et l'Europe vaincue, si vous aviez un COMITÉ DE CLÉMENTE; c'est ce comité qui finirait la Révolution; car la clemence est aussi une mesure révolutionnaire et la plus efficace de toutes, quand elle est distribuée avec sagesse. Que les imbeciles et les fripons m'appellent modéré, s'ils le veulent; je ne rougis point de n'être pas plus enragé que Marcus Brutus. . . .

"L'établissement d'un comité de clémence me paraît une idée grande et digne du peuple français, effaçant de sa mémoire bien des fautes, puisqu'il en a effacé le temps même où elles furent commises, et qu'il a créé une nouvelle ère de laquelle seule il date sa naissance et ces souvenirs. A ce mot de clémence quel patriote ne sent pas ses entrailles émues? Car le patriotisme est la plénitude de toutes les vertus, et ne peut pas conséquemment exister là où il n'y a ni humanité, ni philanthropie mais une âme aride and desséché par l'égoïsme."



These were bold words indeed when one considers that practically all the members of the great Committee of Government were more or less to be included amongst the "enragés." It is no less boldly that Camille justifies himself at the conclusion of the number.

"I have adopted, in my rôle of journalist, the liberty of opinion which belongs to the representative of the people in the Convention. I have expressed my opinions as to the best method of effecting a revolution in writing, since the feebleness of my voice and my slight oratorical powers will not permit me to develop them in another fashion. . . . If, I say, my Committee of Clemency appears ill-sounding to some of my colleagues and savouring of moderation, to those who reproach me with being a moderate in this No. 4, I can respond, as did Marat, when, in very different times, we reproached him with over-violence in his journal: 'Vous n'y entendez rien; eh, mon Dieu! laissez-moi dire: on n'en rabattrà que trop.'"

It may assuredly be said of Camille's views with regard to the reign of peace and liberty that they were utopian and impossible of realisation. He confidently expected a millennium to come to pass before its time. But at least it is an optimism which does his heart credit, and which, even now, lends to his words an irresistible appeal.

Meanwhile the Hébertists were gathering themselves together. It must be remembered that this was no mere newspaper war; it was a life and death fight, with the guillotine as the punishment for defeat.

Danton was in Paris once more, as we have seen, and combating the policy of the "enragés," but he had lost his once mighty influence both in the Convention and at the Clubs by his absence. Robespierre was still compassing the fall of the "ultras," but, none the less, he both disliked and feared Danton and dreaded that the great Tribune might regain his former power.

On the 1st of Nivôse (December 21st) Camille was denounced at the Jacobins by one Nicolas, a juror

to the Revolutionary Tribunal. This man was also a printer and worked in this capacity for the Ministry of War and the Revolutionary Tribunal, by means of which he had become a wealthy man. He was, moreover, the devoted friend and adherent of Robespierre. As Camille himself said of him, in the fifth number of the "Vieux Cordelier": "Nicolas est un gaillard grand et fort qui, armé d'une gros bâton, suivant Robespierre partout et valait à lui seul, une compagnie de muscadins."

This Nicolas then ascended the tribune especially to denounce the third number of the "Vieux Cordelier."

"I rise," said he, "to denounce Camille Desmoulins. I accuse him of having written a libel with criminal and counter-revolutionary intentions. I appeal to those who have read it. Camille Desmoulins has been within a close shave of the guillotine for a long time; as a proof it is only necessary to remind you of the steps which he took at the Revolutionary Committee of my section to save a bad citizen whom we had arrested by order of the Committee of General Security, as accused of intimate correspondence with conspirators and of having sheltered the traitor Nantouillet in his house. I demand the expulsion of Camille Desmoulins from the bosom of this Society."

This measure was supported by Camille's bitter enemy Hébert, and the journalist was invited to explain the denunciations pronounced against him. Camille reserved his defence, as we shall see, for publication in his fifth number, but meanwhile his enemies were gathering around him.

A new champion had appeared upon the side of the Jacobins. Collot d'Herbois arrived in Paris on December 21st somewhat unexpectedly, fresh from consummating the Terror in Lyons. He openly supported Hébert and his partisans against Camille in the Convention and at the Clubs. Yet another of Camille's greatest enemies returned from the frontier

at this moment. Austere, implacable Saint-Just took his place beside his master, Robespierre, hating the Hébertists, it is true, yet hating Camille even more, and with a bitterer personal animosity.

Truly the over-bold journalist was hemmed in on every side. It only remained for Robespierre to desert him, and that was soon to come. As von Sybel says, the attitude of the incorruptible Maximilian at this juncture was extraordinary throughout; it is only explicable when one remembers the strange streak of cowardice in this man.

After the appearance of Camille's No. 4, the Club of the Cordeliers cast him out. At the beginning of his fifth number, which, although dated Nivôse 5th (December 25th), did not appear until Nivôse 16th (January 5th, 1794), the journalist laughs at the idea of this expulsion.

“Voyant que le père Duchesne, et presque toutes les sentinelles patriotes, se tenaient sur le tillac avec leurs lunettes occupés uniquement à crier: ‘Gare! Vous touchez au modérantisme!’ il a bien fallu que moi, vieux Cordelier et doyen des Jacobins, je me chargeasse de la faction difficile, et dont aucun des jeunes gens ne voulait, par crainte de se dépopulariser; celle de crier: ‘Gare! Vous allez toucher à l'exagération!’ . . . Pardon, frères et amis, si j'ose prendre encore le titre de ‘Vieux Cordelier’ après l'arrêté du Club, qui me défend de me parer de ce nom. Mais, en vérité, c'est une insolence si inouïe que celle de petit-fils se révoltant contre leur grand-père, et lui défendant de porter son nom que je veux plaider cette cause contre ces fils ingrats.”

In this number Camille attacked his enemies personally. He made unsparing use of that dangerous weapon of ridicule which had already created against him those bitter foes who were hunting him down. He proceeds at first to rebut the accusations of royalism and conspiracy, brought against him by Nicolas, raising counter-accusations of bribery and corruption. The concluding phrase is totally untranslatable, referring



as it does to Nicolas' slang expression that : " Camille had shaved (*frise*) the guillotine pretty closely."

"C'est ainsi que moi, je suis un aristocrate qui *frise* la guillotine et que Nicolas est un sans-culotte qui *frise* la fortune."

"However," Camille continues, "the 'hit-hards' have believed Nicolas rather than Robespierre; and already in groups they call me a conspirator. It is true, citizens, that for five years I have conspired to render France Republican, happy and flourishing."

Then follows the account, already given, of that great day, July 12th, 1789. In vivid and moving language the journalist recalls the occasion, for he is using the recollection of his own part in that event as a plea for his honour and for his life.

Then, having justified himself before the people, he turns again upon the "ultras," jeering at them with more than his old bitter raillery. Barère, speaking in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, had solemnly denounced Camille's attitude.

"Very well," says the journalist, "one day posterity will judge between the 'suspects' of Barère, and the 'suspects' of Tacitus. In the meantime, the patriots shall be satisfied in my respect; because, after this solemn censure, I have acted like Fénelon, who mounted into the pulpit to read aloud the brief of the Pope, condemning his 'Maxims of the Saints,' and tore them up himself; I am ready to burn my Number 3; and already I have forbidden Desenne to reprint it, at least unbound."

This seeming acquiescence of Camille in their decrees cannot have been a source of any particular satisfaction to Barère or to his colleagues upon the Committee of Public Safety; more especially when we read what follows. Is it *Barère*, the journalist asks, who blames him thus from the tribune?

"If it had been an old Cordelier like myself, a right-angled patriot like Billaud-Varennès, for example, who had attacked

me so severely . . . but thou, my dear Barère, thou, the President of the Feuillants, thou who hast proposed the Committee of Twelve . . . thou against whom I could bring up many other faults if I wished to foul the 'Vieux-Sac' . . . thou, who hast all at once out-Robespierred Robespierre ! ”

But it is Hébert whom Camille attacks most fiercely, doubtless still feeling quite confident here of the support of Robespierre. He assails the unspeakable “Père Duchesne” with all the virulence of which he is capable. He accuses Hébert of being an “*écrivain engagé*” bought and bribed by Bouchotte and others to calumniate Danton, Philippeaux and Camille himself. He ends his tirade with this terrible passage :—

“Dost thou not know, Hébert, that when the tyrants of Europe wish to vilify the Republic, when they wish to cause it to be believed that France is covered with the darkness of barbarism, that Paris, so praised for its Attic glory and taste, is peopled by Vandals ; dost thou not know, wretched man, that to gain their ends it is extracts from thy writings that they insert in their gazettes ? As if the people were as ignorant and stupid as thou wouldst have Mr. Pitt believe them to be ; as if no one could speak to him save in language like thine, as if such was the speech of the Convention and of the Committee of Public Safety ; as if thy filthiness was that of the nation ; as if a sewer of Paris were the Seine ! ”

Amongst Hébert's furious and often impotent accusations against Camille had been this, that the journalist had married a rich wife, coupled with some of those foul innuendoes which were the natural language of “Père Duchesne.” There is much simple dignity in the words wherein Camille answers this accusation and vindicates the unsullied happiness of his married life. We have quoted from this passage in an earlier chapter, but we will give it here in its entirety. It touches a deeper and a graver note than can be found in all the bitter raillery of the remainder of this number ; there is in it something intimate and

personal ; a revelation of the tenderer, happier side of Camille's life. It is one of those passages in his writings for which we love the man ; where he speaks from his heart, as it were, driven by an irresistible impulse.

"I will only say one word about my wife. I have always believed in the immortality of the soul. After the many sacrifices of personal interests which I have made to liberty and for the happiness of the people, I have said, at the height of the persecution : 'There must be some recompense for virtue elsewhere.' But my marriage is so happy, my domestic bliss so great, that I feared to have received my recompense already upon earth, and I almost lost my confidence in immortality. But thy persecutions, thy rage against me, thy cowardly calumnies have rendered back to me all my hope.

"As to the fortune of my wife, she brought me an income of four thousand livres, which is all that I possess. In this revolution where, if I may be permitted to say it, I have played a sufficiently large part, where I have been a polemical writer, importuned turn by turn by all parties, who have found me incorruptible, where, some time before the 10th of August, they bargained even for my silence, and that at a high price. Ah, well, in this revolution where I have filled successively the posts of Secretary-General to the Department of Justice and that of representative of the people to the Convention, my fortune has not been increased by so much as one sou. Hébert, can you say as much for yourself ? "

Towards the end of this fifth number Camille rises to a height of eloquence which almost seems inspired, nay, which was inspired, in the highest sense of the word.

"Oh, my colleagues, I say to you as Brutus did to Cicero : 'We are too much afraid of death, exile and poverty—*Nimium timemus mortem et exilium et paupertatem.*' Is this life worth being prolonged at the expense of honour ? . . . Ah, why ! when every day twelve hundred thousand French soldiers face redoubts bristling with cannon, and fly from victory to victory ; we, deputies to the Convention, we who cannot fall like the soldiers in the obscurity of night, shot down in the shadows, without witnesses of their valour, we, in whom



death endured for liberty can only be glorious, solemn and in the presence of the entire nation, of Europe and of posterity—shall we be more cowardly than our soldiers? Shall we fear to expose ourselves, and to meet Bouchotte face to face? Shall we not dare to brave ‘the great anger of “Père Duchesne”’?—to gain thus the great victory awaited by the French people; the victory over the ultra-revolutionaries as well as the counter-revolutionaries; the victory over all those who intrigue, all the rascals, all the ambitious, all the enemies of the public well-being? . . . Let us occupy ourselves, oh, my colleagues, not in defending our own lives like sick men, but in defending our liberty and our principles like Republicans! And even if, which seems impossible, calumny and crime should, for a moment, triumph over virtue, can one believe that, even upon the scaffold, sustained by the consciousness that I have loved my country and the Republic passionately, sustained by the thought of the eternal testimony of the centuries, surrounded by the esteem and regret of all true republicans; can one believe, I say, that I would wish to change my fate for the fortune of that miserable Hébert, who, in his journal, drives to despair twenty classes of citizens and more than three millions of Frenchmen, of whom he says anathema, and whom he consigns to death sweepingly, in one common conscription; who, to stifle his remorse and his calumnies, has been obliged to resort to a drunkenness more complete than that of wine, and to lick, unceasingly, the blood at the foot of the guillotine!

“What then is the scaffold for a patriot save the pedestal of Sidney and of Jean de Witt? What in this time of warfare, where I have seen my two brothers mutilated and hacked for liberty, what is the guillotine more than a sabre-cut, and the most glorious of all deaths for a deputy who dies, the victim of his courage and of his republicanism?”

In the course of this number Camille, speaking of his early republicanism, boasted that: “Certainly, the ‘Procureur Général de la Lanterne,’ in 1789, was as good a revolutionary as Hébert, who, at that time, opened the doors to him, bowing to the ground.”

This reference was an ill-timed one on Camille’s part. He laid himself open thereby to the attack of Hébert, who assailed him with a weapon which was,

of all those that could be used, the one most calculated to wound him deeply. Camille cared nothing for accusations of moderatism, or even royalism, but it was left to the "Père Duchesne" to assail him in his most vulnerable spot, to recall the remembrance of his former errors.

This is "The answer of J. R. Hébert, author of the 'Père Duchesne,' to Camille Desmoulins and Company."

"Here, my brave sans-culottes, here is a great man whom you have forgotten ; it is truly ungrateful of you, for he declares that, without him, there would never have been a revolution. Formerly he called himself 'Procureur Général de la Lanterne.' You think I am speaking of that famous cut-throat whose celebrated beard made the aristocrats take flight ; no, he of whom we speak boasts that he is the most pacific of men. To believe him, he has no more gall than a pigeon ; he is so sensitive that he never hears the word ' guillotine ' without shivering to his very bones ; he is a great teacher, who, in his own person, has more wisdom than all the patriots put together, and more judgment than the entire Convention ; it is a great pity that he cannot speak : or he would prove to the ' Moniteur ' and the Committee of Public Safety that they have no common sense. But, if he cannot speak, Master Camille can make up for it by writing, to the great satisfaction of the moderates, Royalists, and aristocrats."

There was a terrible undercurrent of truth beneath these words of Hébert's which caused them to be almost unanswerable.

### III

**A**T last Camille had gone too far. Even while he still believed that he was expressing the sentiments of Robespierre, that same "old comrade" was preparing to desert him. Whatever his private views may have been, the elder man dared not risk the loss of his popularity. He had that complete control over his feelings which Camille, fortunately for humanity, did not possess.

On December 21st, as we have seen, Collot d'Herbois returned from Lyons, and at once showed himself as Camille's enemy. The journalist says, in the fifth number of the "Vieux Cordelier," that Collot attacked him at the Jacobins early in Nivôse, but "not by name." It would seem, nevertheless, that Camille was indicated quite unmistakably in one of those melodramatic speeches, by means of which the ex-actor was in the habit of appealing to the gallery. "He made a veritable tragedy," writes Camille, "to excite the passions of the tribunes against me."

There was a special session of the Jacobins on Nivôse 16th (January 5th), the very day on which the fifth number of the "Vieux Cordelier" was for sale. The hall was densely crowded, and very high prices were paid to obtain seats to hear the debate.

Collot had gauged the feeling of the Club ; he knew that the sympathy of the majority of the members was with him. Accordingly he rose at the opening of the session to demand that the conduct of Camille and Philippeaux be examined into further. On the whole,



his speech was more moderate than might have been expected. His attack was directed especially against Philippeaux, whom he accused, in effect, of conspiring against the Revolution with Fabre d'Eglantine and others.

Collot treated Camille much more gently. He said that he was convinced of the journalist's genuine patriotism, but believed that he had been misled by bad company. In words that were patronisingly contemptuous, he advised Camille to be more careful in the future, and asked only that the rash writer should be censured.

Now Collot, knowingly or unknowingly, had chosen the very worst line to take where Camille was concerned. Burning to prove that he was not to be treated thus lightly, the journalist demanded that his last number should be read aloud immediately, since it contained his own defence.

When this motion was proposed by the President, Hébert violently opposed the reading of Camille's paper. Doubtless he had already seen it, and he dreaded the effect upon the Club of that astounding and crushing indictment of himself which the number contained.

"Camille wishes to turn people's attention from himself, to complicate the discussion!" cried Hébert. "He accuses me of having robbed the treasury—it is an infamous falsehood!"

"I have the proofs of it in my hand!" shouted back Camille.

As may be imagined, such words as these caused an immense sensation. Robespierre the younger rose in an attempt to calm the tumult which ensued.

"These personalities should not be allowed," he said. "The Society does not meet to protect private reputations; if Hébert is a thief, what does it matter to us? Those who have reproaches to make ought not to interrupt the general discussion."

"I have nothing with which to reproach myself!" cried Hébert, furious at this contemptuous dismissal of his case.

"The dissensions in the departments are your work," retorted Augustin Robespierre. "You have helped to stir them up by attacking the liberty of the sects."

This downright accusation silenced Hébert, and Maximilian Robespierre now rose to speak. He was more moderate and conciliatory than his younger brother had been, but scarcely less bitter against Hébert. He endeavoured to pacify all parties, insisting that these personal quarrels ought to be laid aside when the interests of the Republic were at stake. Robespierre, however, showed plainly enough what were his feelings with regard to Hébert. He inferred, in fact, that it was unnecessary to discuss Camille's attacks upon the editor of "*Père Duchesne*," since all the world knew how well-founded they were.

Finally Robespierre insisted that the debate should be confined to Collot's original motion, the discussion of Philippeaux's conduct in attacking the leaders of the army in La Vendée. Camille and his affairs were shelved for the time being. The remainder of this sitting was occupied in the cross-questioning of a large number of witnesses against Philippeaux.

On Nivôse 18th (January 7th) this business should have been resumed, but the principal person concerned was not present. Philippeaux absented himself, thoroughly weary of the seemingly endless discussion of his conduct and motives. The Club accordingly turned its attention to the affairs of Bourdon (de l'Oise), Fabre d'Eglantine and Camille. Their names were called three times without any reply being received, but just as Robespierre made the suggestion that public opinion should judge them in their absence, Camille appeared in the hall.

He was at once summoned to explain his relations with Philippeaux, and the unguarded way in which he

had praised both him and his pamphlet. Camille answered these accusations somewhat evasively. He said, in effect, what was in fact true, that he scarcely knew Philippeaux personally. He had been carried away by his writings, without enquiring into their truth: he retracted his ill-considered praise, and, in short, had no opinion in the matter, one way or the other.

It must be confessed that this self-defence of Camille's did not carry conviction; by tacitly confessing that he had been over-hasty and lacking in judgment, he laid himself open to accusations of weakness, if no worse.

It is plain that the subterfuge by which, on the 16th Nivôse, Robespierre had prevented No. 5 of the "Vieux Cordelier" from being read aloud, was kindly meant. He had no wish to sacrifice Camille; it would seem that he was as fond of him as his cold nature permitted, and the journalist did not stand in his path to dictatorship as did Danton.

Yet it is impossible not to suspect self-interest beneath this seeming tolerance. It must be remembered that the "Vieux Cordelier" had been published hitherto under the auspices of Robespierre; he had corrected the proofs of most of the issues, it is probable that he had even seen this very No. 5 before it was printed. But a fortnight had elapsed between the completion and the publication of this fifth issue, and Robespierre had had time to repent of his temerity in lending his support to Camille's enterprise, to see plainly whither all this was tending, and to resolve that he would not be implicated in the downfall of the headstrong journalist.

If Camille had yielded gracefully and obediently to Robespierre's will; if he had abjured his over-bold writings, pleaded that he had indeed been misled in publishing them, it is possible that he might have been saved. But Camille, to his everlasting honour,



did not retract that which he had written, and if, in consequence, he lost his life, he gained by that stubbornness the respect of future generations.

After Camille's hesitating apology for his eulogies of Philippeaux, Robespierre rose to defend his young colleague. We must remember, in common justice, that there is this to be said for the method which Maximilian adopted ; it was probably the only possible way by which, if Camille had been disposed to take advantage of it, he might have been saved from the fury of the extreme party and those of the Committee who were his violent personal enemies. The fault of Robespierre's defence lay in the fact that he had taken up the worst possible line of treatment as far as Camille, personally, was concerned ; and this he did, probably, from sheer ignorance of human nature, and want of appreciation of a character so alien to his own as was that of the journalist.

"I have several times taken up the defence of Camille," said Robespierre. "I permitted myself then some reflections on his character ; friendship allowed this ; but to-day I am forced to adopt a different tone. Camille promised to abjure the political heresies, the erroneous, ill-sounding propositions which cover all the pages of the 'Vieux Cordelier.' Camille, puffed by the prodigious success of his numbers, and the perfidious praise that the aristocrats heap upon him, has not abandoned the path which error had traced for him. His writings are dangerous ; they nourish the hopes of our enemies and favour public malignity. . . . The writings of Camille are condemnable ; but notwithstanding it is necessary to distinguish carefully the person from his works. Camille is a spoilt child who has good dispositions, but whom bad companions have misled. It is necessary to protest against his numbers, which Brissot himself would not have dared to avow, and to preserve Desmoulins in the midst of us. I demand, in conse-

quence, that the numbers of Camille's paper shall be burnt in the Society."

During Robespierre's speech Camille's anger and indignation had been growing to fever heat. He was both bewildered and infuriated at this change of front on the part of his friend. Could this be Robespierre who was speaking—Robespierre, who had guided his pen in the beginning, who had corrected the proofs of the "*Vieux Cordelier*" with his own hand? Disregarding the veiled threats, Camille chafed impotently at the contemptuous indulgence of Robespierre's tone.

At last he saw his opportunity; the speaker gave him the opening for a retort. Without pause for consideration Camille sprang from his seat.

"That is all very well, Robespierre!" he cried, clearly and without his usual stammer. "But I reply, like Rousseau: 'To burn is not to answer!'"

At this bold retort Robespierre lost patience. It is probable that he was really conscious of doing the best he could for Camille, seeing that it was not in the nature of the man to defend another at the expense of his own safety and popularity. Since the fool would not be saved, let him go his own way, even if it led him to destruction. It was in vain that Danton tried to explain matters, to make peace between the two angry men.

"Do not be afraid, Camille," he said, "at the rather severe lesson which Robespierre, out of his strong feeling of friendship, has just given you."

Even if Danton had been able to appease Camille, he could not soothe Robespierre. The latter answered Camille's daring challenge with a bitter vindictiveness which should have warned the young man that he had indeed gone too far.

"So be it," replied Robespierre. "We will answer, then, instead of burning, since Camille still defends his writings. If he wishes it, let him be covered with

ignominy ; let the Society restrain its indignation no longer, since he is obstinate in maintaining his diatribes and his dangerous principles. I was evidently mistaken in believing that he was merely misled ; if he had been in good faith, if he had merely written in the simplicity of his heart, he would not have dared to uphold works which are proscribed by patriots and welcomed by counter-revolutionaries. His courage is only borrowed ; it betrays someone concealed, who has dictated what he has written in his journal ; it betrays that Desmoulins is the organ of a rascally faction which has borrowed his pen to spread its poison with all the more audacity and sureness. Let Camille be judged out of his own mouth ; let his numbers be read to the Society immediately."

And then, speaking to Camille directly, with venomous irritation, Robespierre added :—

"Learn, that if thou hadst not been Camille, we should not have had so much indulgence for thee. The manner in which thou seekest to justify thyself proves to me that thou hast bad intentions."

Too late Camille saw the mistake he had made in browbeating Robespierre. He tried to obtain a hearing, that he might speak in his own defence, but the Society refused to listen to him. They at once proceeded to hear the debatable numbers of the "Vieux Cordelier."

At this sitting a secretary read aloud the daring fourth number, and the ceremony was continued next day. On this occasion the famous No. 3 was read by Momoro, once Camille's overprudent printer of the "France Libre," now the most violent of ultra-revolutionaries.

At the end of the session Robespierre spoke again, and incidentally showed his own hand very plainly. Camille, he said again, with contemptuous patronage, Camille was a strange mixture of truth and falsehood, of cleverness and self-deception. Whether the Jacobins



retained or expelled him mattered very little ; he was only an individual. The interests of the nation, Robespierre added, were menaced by two parties, the counter-revolutionaries and the ultra-revolutionaries—"Both Camille and Hébert are equally wrong in my eyes."

The result of all this discussion appeared, at least for the moment, to be fairly satisfactory as far as Camille was concerned. He was not expelled from the Jacobins ; he was even tacitly permitted to retain his membership, although it appears that he rarely went to the Club again after this date, but the Cordeliers passed an ominous resolution on hearing of the apparent moderation of the sister Club.

They decreed that : "Camille, already excluded from their ranks, had also lost their confidence, although formerly he had rendered great services to the Revolution."

There was no doubt that the Moderates were discredited and distrusted, at least by those in power. As for the others, who had welcomed Camille's appeal for clemency so enthusiastically, they could do nothing to direct the course of events ; nobody, as yet, dared to oppose the Great Committee, and the Committee was resolved upon the downfall of the Dantonists.

At last Camille fully realised his own danger and the inevitable end of his course of action. Robespierre's attitude must needs have opened his eyes. Yet, on the whole, it is plain that he did not regret what he had done. There is a story told by Jules Claretie and repeated in a slightly different form by M. Lenotre, which reveals clearly enough the attitude of mind of both Camille and his wife.

Brune, the future marshal of the Empire and their devoted friend, was breakfasting with the pair one morning. The guest was depressed and full of mournful forebodings, and he felt impelled to warn Camille of the grave danger which he ran by con-

tinuing to publish the "Vieux Cordelier." But Camille and Lucile refused to be intimidated, and the young wife said, with serious confidence, as she poured out the chocolate for their friend:—

"Let him alone, Brune. Let him fulfil his mission. He must save his country."

And Camille answered more lightly, playing with his little boy as he spoke:—

"Pooh! What matter? Edamus et bibamus, cras enim moriemur!"

It was not always that Camille could laugh thus at the danger which threatened him and those whom he loved. There is a passage in the works of a contemporary writer which shows us what a dark cloud of depression had habitually settled now upon the spirits of the highly strung, sensitive journalist.

One Miot de Melito, a brilliant man of affairs, who was later to take a prominent part in the politics of the Napoleonic era, was at this time attached to the Ministry of War at Paris. The young diplomatist tells us that he dined frequently at the house of Déforgues, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and that he often met Camille at these gatherings. The whole passage gives such a vivid impression of the journalist's bodily and mental attitude at this time that it is best to reproduce it at length.

"Camille Desmoulins," Miot de Melito writes, "was also amongst the number of those who dined pretty frequently at Déforgues'. His personal appearance was commonplace, he had no external advantages, nor did his conversation belie the grudging hand with which nature had endowed him. Gloomy and silent, his countenance wore an expression of profound melancholy, and it was difficult to recognise the orator of the early days of the revolution of 1789, the orator who, standing on a chair at the Palais Royal, had by his stirring words produced the great popular movement of that famous period.

"At the time when I was in the habit of seeing him, he was horror-struck at the terrible scenes which passed before his eyes every day, and was endeavouring to arouse a spirit of

humanity. In several numbers of a newspaper entitled the 'Vieux Cordelier' which was edited by him, he ventured (for it was then an act of the greatest courage) to advocate a return to clemency. Danton laughed at him for what he chose to call his weakness, but Camille Desmoulins, who was also excluded by each so-called patriotic society for having advocated these new doctrines, made no reply.

"His gloom announced that he already foresaw the fate awaiting him, and the few words that he uttered were always enquiries or observations on the sentences of the Revolutionary Tribunal, on the kind of death inflicted on the condemned, and on the most dignified and decorous way of preparing for and enduring it."

It is strange to note how this idea of dying with decorum had always obsessed Camille. At the very beginning of his literary career, in one of the early numbers of the "Révolutions de France et de Brabant," he dwells on the same subject when he is speaking of the ignominious death of the royalist Marquis de Favras.

"The firmness with which he died was that of a gladiator, who, being mortally wounded, strives to fall with decency and dignity."

The same thought haunted Camille once more, save that now it was his own death which he had in mind, that death which intuition and common sense alike must have warned him was drawing near.

But by far the most living picture of the life of Camille and his wife at this time is to be found in a letter from Lucile herself to Fréron. Camille's former sub-editor was on mission from the Convention at Toulon. He was employing against the Royalists in that unfortunate town all the most extreme "terrorist" methods, to put down the counter-revolutionary rising, and earning for himself a name and a reputation very different from that of the "Lapin" Fréron of those old happy days at Bourg-la-Reine. Fréron had written to the Desmoulins a short time



before, at the beginning of the movement for clemency. It is in this letter that he recalls so charmingly their pleasant time of companionship in a passage which has already been quoted. Later, he shows himself very much at variance with Camille's new ideas. He advises him to bridle his imagination with regard to the Committee of Clemency.

"It would be a triumph for the counter-revolutionaries. Do not let his philanthropy blind him ; but wage war to the knife with all these patriot-adventurers."

It is probably this same letter of Fréron's to which Camille referred in No. 5 of the "*Vieux Cordelier*." In this number he defended his friend against the attacks of Hébert, who "calls Fréron, as he calls me, a heretofore patriot, a muscadin, a Sardanapalus——"

There follows an impassioned apostrophe from Camille :—

"Oh, my dear Fréron, it is by means of gross artifices indeed that the patriots of August 10th undermine the pillars of the ancient district of the Cordeliers ! You wrote ten days ago to my wife : ' I dream only of Toulon, where I shall either perish, or deliver it up to the Republic : I depart. The cannonade will begin as soon as I arrive ; we go to win either laurels or a willow branch ; prepare the one or the other for me.' Oh, my brave Fréron, we have both of us wept for joy at hearing this morning of the victory of the Republic, and it is laurels that we shall bear before thee, instead of laying the willow upon thy ashes."

Lucile answered Fréron's letter some weeks later, upon the 24th Nivôse. She is writing very soon after that terrible sitting of the Jacobins upon the 18th Nivôse, when Robespierre finally repudiated the man who had been his tool,—and his friend. Probably poor Camille was too sick at heart to write himself. It is Lucile who defends her husband's actions and policy against the miscomprehension of their old comrade, writing with all the spirit and enthusiasm of a

woman whose adored husband has been attacked and betrayed.

“Come back, Fréron, come back quickly. You have no time to lose: bring with you all the old Cordeliers you can meet with; we have the greatest need of them; if it had pleased Heaven not to have ever dispersed them! You cannot have an idea of what is doing here! You are ignorant of everything; you only see a feeble glimmering in the distance, which can give you but a faint idea of our situation. Indeed, I am not surprised that you reproach Camille for his Committee of Clemency. He cannot be judged from Toulon. You are happy where you are; all has gone according to the wish of your heart; but we, calumniated, persecuted by the ignorant, the intriguing, and even by patriots! Robespierre, your head-piece, has denounced Camille to the Jacobins; he has had Numbers 3 and 4 read and has demanded that they should be burnt; he, who had read them in manuscript—can you conceive such a thing? For two consecutive sittings he has thundered or rather shrieked against Camille. At the third sitting Camille’s name was cancelled. Oddly enough, he made inconceivable efforts to have the cancelling reported; it was reported; but he saw that when he did not think or act according to the will of a certain number of individuals, he was not all powerful. Marius (Danton) is not listened to any more; he is losing courage and vigour. D’Eglantine is arrested, and in the Luxembourg. So he was not a patriot! He who had been one until now! A patriot the less is a misfortune the more.

“The monsters have dared to reproach Camille with having married a rich woman. Ah, let them never speak of me; let them ignore my existence, let me live in the midst of a desert. I ask nothing from them, I will give up to them all I possess, provided I do not breathe the same air as they; could I but forget them and all the evils they cause us. I see nothing but misfortune around me. I confess, I am too weak to bear such a sight. Life has become a heavy burden. I cannot even think,—thinking, once such a pure and sweet pleasure, alas, I am deprived of it. My eyes fill with tears. I shut up this terrible sorrow in my heart; I meet Camille with a serene look. I affect courage that he may keep up his. You do not seem to have read his five numbers. Yet you are a subscriber.

"Yes, the wild thyme is gathered, quite ready. I plucked it amid many cares. I laugh no more; I never act the cat; I never touch my piano; I dream no more: I am nothing but a machine now. I see no one, I never go out. It is a long time since I have seen the Roberts. They have got into difficulties through their own fault. They are trying to be forgotten. Farewell, Lapin, you will call me mad again. I am not, however, quite yet; I still have enough reason left to suffer.

"I cannot express to you my joy in learning that your dear sister had met with no accident; I have been quite uneasy since I heard Toulon was taken. I wondered incessantly what would be their fate. Speak to them sometimes from me. Embrace them both from me. I beg them to do the same to you for me.

"Do you hear? My Loup cried out: 'Martin, my dear Martin, here, thou art come that I may embrace thee; come back very soon.'

"Come back, come back very soon, we are awaiting thee impatiently."

Nothing could possibly make us realise better what Lucile's life was at this time—a life which must also have been that of many another loving, anxious wife and mother. She knew, as well as Camille himself, the daily and hourly danger which her husband ran. It is plain from this letter that she suffered the added misery of knowing that her supposed, wholly imaginary wealth was one of the reproaches directed against Camille.

There is infinite pathos and infinite tenderness in the words which describe how she "shuts up this terrible sorrow in her heart"—"meets Camille with a serene look"—"affects courage that he may keep up his." We can imagine that this was no easy task, this keeping up of Camille's courage, whilst her own heart ached so unbearably. For Camille, sensitive, volatile Camille, must have been difficult to soothe and calm now that his enemies were closing in on every side, whilst he saw his popularity slipping away from his grasp, leaving him to meet their attacks, defenceless. Poor Camille, whose one preoccupation now was how



to die decently ; one can fancy that his thoughts and words must have wounded Lucile's loving heart.

The sixth number of the "Vieux Cordelier," although dated Nivôse 10th, did not in reality appear until Pluviôse 15th (February, 1794).

At the forefront of this issue Camille printed two mottoes. One was a quotation from Valerius Maximus : "Peregrinatus est, animus ejus in nequitia non habitavit." For his other epigraph the journalist used an extract from Collot d'Herbois' speech at the Jacobins, thus trying to turn the words of one of his deadliest enemies to good account, with a kind of despairing recklessness.

"Camille Desmoulins," Collot had said, "fait une débauche d'esprit avec les aristocrates ; mais il est toujours bon republicain et il lui est impossible d'être autre chose."

This sixth number, with its unfinished "Credo Politique du Vieux Cordelier," was rather more orthodox from the point of view of the "Mountain" than its predecessors. Nevertheless, with one of those errors of judgment for which we love him, Camille breaks off in this quite legitimate creed of his to relate the incident of the arrest of his father-in-law, who had been imprisoned on a charge of conspiracy in the Carmelite Convent, in a fashion which can scarcely be called respectful towards the laws and manners of the Republic.

He again insists that the law of kindness would prove to be more powerful than that of terror as the order of the day, and he declares that he has from the first hoped and preached that the Republic would bring peace and happiness rather than misery and terror in its train.

In a postscript to this number Camille attacks Hébert once more, almost for the last time, with most terrible and bitter raillery.

"Miracle !" he cries. "Grand conversion of Père Duchesne ! 'I have already said a hundred times,' writes he

in one of his last numbers, 'and I will say it always that one should imitate the *sansculotte* Jesus! That one should obey the letter of the Gospel and live in peace with all men. . . .'

"When Hébert speaks thus, I shall be the first to cry: 'The National Treasury cannot pay too highly for such numbers!' Continue, Hébert; the divine *sans-culotte* whom you quote has also said: 'There is more joy in Heaven over one Père Duchesne who repents, than over ninety-nine Vieux Cordeliers who need no repentance.' But you ought to remember to have read in the same book: 'Thou shalt not say to thy brother, Raca, that is to say, *viedase*. Thou shalt not lie.'"

During the early spring of 1794 Robespierre continued to attack the Hébertist faction relentlessly. The "ultras" did not fall without a struggle. Carrier, the butcher of Nantes, hero of "noyades" and of deeds unspeakable, thundered from the tribune of the Cordeliers, whilst Hébert, in the "Père Duchesne" threatened and raved, with the fear of death before his eyes.

It was all in vain. One day towards the end of March stern, implacable Saint-Just rose in the Convention and denounced Hébert and his faction. In cold, pitiless phrases he reviewed their misdeeds, and secured their condemnation. On March 24th the "ultras," Hébert, Momoro, Cloutz, Ronsin and the rest, went to their death.

Camille had played no small part in bringing about the downfall of this party; perhaps for that reason he hoped that he might still escape denunciation. Probably, too, his close association with Danton gave him confidence, for Danton despised the Committee and all its works, and, up to the very end, when warned that they plotted his downfall, repeated that they "would not dare."

Yet, in a measure, the great Tribune of the people had lost his power. His grip on public opinion had slackened; that withdrawal to Arcis at a crisis in the history of the Revolution was to cost him dear. The

Terror had progressed without Danton, it had outstripped him. He, the mover and creator of the insurrection of August 10th, was now considered almost a "moderate."

And Robespierre, he who had said: "Both Camille and Hébert are equally wrong in my eyes," also feared Danton. There was too much brutal, far-reaching humanity in this man to fit in with his narrow, well-regulated schemes for the well-being of France and of France's regenerator, Maximilian Robespierre. Danton would probably spread disorder through the inhuman Utopia of Robespierre and Saint-Just: it would be far better if he were removed.

Camille had yet another source of confidence. He knew that he had fallen from the favour of those in power, he knew that most of his former friends had deserted him, but he did not believe that the people would allow him to be sacrificed. Camille had not, as yet, learnt that lesson which almost all the leaders of the Revolution had, sooner or later, to lay to heart—the lesson that no dependence could be placed in the mob. He knew that he had once been popular; he did not comprehend that the rapid sequence of events had entirely blotted from the minds of the people of Paris the remembrance of his services, those services of which he had reminded his readers so eloquently in the fifth number of the "Vieux Cordelier."

The spring came early to France that year of 1794. We have the evidence of many contemporaries to prove that it was long enough since such perfect weather had been known at that season. At the beginning of March, it was hot and almost summer-like. The woods all round Paris had broken into their young leaves; the Seine danced and sparkled beneath a sky of unclouded blue. As the month drew on the lilacs in the gardens of the Luxembourg began to bloom before their time, scenting the air with their hot, clean fragrance.



Perhaps during those anxious days Camille and Lucile sometimes walked together there, beneath the flowering trees. One would like to think so, and to believe that they forgot, for a moment, their present dangers and forebodings in recalling those past happy hours of their life, which these same gardens had witnessed.

It was here that Camille had first met the child who was to be his wife ; it was here also that, a few short weeks later, he was to see her for the last time on earth.

Yet although the shadow of their approaching fate hung over these two who were all in all to each other, full knowledge was mercifully spared them. We may be very sure that even during these last months there were happy hours, spaces when all their sorrows were forgotten as they listened to little Horace's baby prattle. Fortunately, a sudden and violent death is unrealisable to a man in the full enjoyment of his health and strength. In moments of despondency Camille may have honestly believed that he expected and was prepared for death, but the moments were probably far more frequent when he was confident that somehow or other he would yet escape.

Meanwhile the journalist was engaged in writing the seventh number of the "*Vieux Cordelier*." After the first three issues the paper had not appeared with any pretence of regularity : in fact, it was never a journal in the same sense as the "*Révolutions de France*." This last number was belated indeed ; it never appeared in Camille's lifetime.

Had it done so, it might only have made his condemnation the more sure, for it was bold : bolder even than its predecessors. Indeed, according to Michelet, the allusions to Robespierre in this seventh number of the "*Vieux Cordelier*" actually did lead to the author's arrest.

The pamphlet takes the form of an imaginary conversation between Camille himself and a typical

“old Cordelier.” When Desenne, the publisher, saw the proofs of this No. 7 he took fright and declared that he dared not print it. He was not so bold as Camille; moreover he had none of the journalist’s reasons for personal animosity. The attacks on Robespierre were too flagrant and too obvious; it did not certainly require any very extraordinary degree of perspicacity to guess who was intended by such a passage as this: “Car jamais ces tyrans n’ont manqué de juger pour faire périr, sous le prétexte de calomnies, quiconque leur déplaisait.”

In another place Camille writes still more openly comparing Robespierre and Danton to Octavius and Antony, much to the disadvantage of the former.

In spite of Desenne’s protests, Camille insisted that the number should be published exactly as he had written it, without alterations. The proofs passed to and fro, and were doubtless read by many people. It is exceedingly probable that Robespierre heard of Camille’s contemplated attack upon him, and determined that he must be silenced, although Michelet would have us believe that it was with extreme reluctance that he consented to the arrest of the journalist.

Camille’s seventh number is, in many respects, a very noteworthy piece of work. Once again, and for the last time, he claims the liberty of the Press although he allows that there may be danger to the State where each writer gives free vent to his own personal opinions—a strange sentiment this, coming from Camille!

He bitterly taunts the members of the Convention with cowardice:—

“If a deputy feels himself obliged to declare his sentiment good or bad, nothing is more pleasant for the Republican who follows these sittings than to observe with what ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’ ‘yeas’ and ‘nays,’ what concessions, circumlocutions and oratorical precautions he envelops his meaning, for fear th

guillotine should find a way to the neck of it. . . . Not one of you dares give utterance on the morrow to the opinion you have agreed upon the day before. Each of you waits for the others. . . . I, on this celebrated Mountain, have merely seen mice deliberating, while no one dared to bell the cat."

Further on, he is even more vehement.

"I contend that we have never been so enslaved as since we have called ourselves Republicans, that we have never grovelled so abjectly before men in credit and in place as since we have spoken with them, hat on head."

Camille concludes the number with another instalment of his political "Credo," in some respects braver and more generous than anything which he had yet written.

"I believe that Liberty is humanity; thus I believe that Liberty would not prevent the relations of prisoners from seeing their fathers, their husbands, or their sons; I believe that Liberty would not condemn the mother of Barnave to knock in vain for eight hours at the door of the Conciergerie, in the hope of speaking to her son, and when this unhappy woman had accomplished a hundred leagues in spite of her great age, to oblige her, to see him yet once again, to wait for him upon the road to the scaffold. . . . I believe that Liberty is magnanimous: she would not insult a condemned criminal at the foot of the guillotine, and after his execution, because death wipes out the crime."

To those who contend that Camille was a mere paid politician, whose pen was at the service of the highest bidder, this number is surely a sufficient refutation. There is no retractation here, no drawing back from the position which he had taken up, although now he was left, unsupported, upon that solitary and dangerous height.

It is plain, surely, that sorrow and the imminent shadow of death had worked a great miracle in Camille; the faun had become a very human man. For long, he and Barnave, the great orator of the first



Assembly, had been strenuously opposed in policy. Friends they could never have been ; their temperaments were too entirely dissimilar. Yet Camille wrote no words which haunt one's memory more than these few lines in which he speaks of Barnave and his widowed mother.

On one of the last days of March, an old teacher of Camille's at the College Louis-le-Grand met the journalist in the Rue St. Honoré, carrying a bundle of papers under his arm.

"What have you there, Camille ?" he asked.

"Only some numbers of my 'Vieux Cordelier,'" answered the young man. "Will you have one ?"

"No, indeed ! It is too dangerous ; they burn !"

"Coward !" laughed Camille, and quoted once more that favourite line of his : "Edamus et bibamus, cras enim moriemur."

"To-morrow we die——" Camille did not guess how almost literally true his words were to prove.

#### IV

**T**HE first direct move against the party of the "Indulgents" was made in the middle of March, when Hérault de Séchelles was expelled from the Committee of Public Safety. A few days later he was arrested and imprisoned, on various trumped-up charges of treasonable conspiracy.

This arrest was an open threat to Danton, since Hérault was his intimate friend. Yet when those around him implored him to escape, he heard them with seeming indifference.

"There is nothing to be done," he said. "Resist? No, enough blood has been shed; I would rather die myself. I prefer to be guillotined rather than to guillotine." And, when they still urged flight: "Does a man carry his fatherland on the soles of his shoes?"

Arguments and entreaties were useless with one who would only answer:

"I know that they wish to arrest me, but no—they will not dare!"

There is something grand in this confidence, ill-founded as it was. It is not surprising if it inspired Camille with the same feeling, accustomed as he was to rely upon the judgment of those whom he respected and trusted.

During the last days of March sinister rumours spread. It was whispered that the arrest of the Dantonists was imminent, and the Members of the Committee maintained an obstinate silence when questioned. A fairly well authenticated story tells

how someone dared to speak to Robespierre himself of his ancient friendship for Danton, asking him to intervene in his favour. Robespierre is said to have answered that he could do nothing, either for or against his colleague, that justice was there to defend innocence, that, as far as he himself was concerned, his entire life had been a continual sacrifice of his affections to the fatherland: and that, if his friend were guilty, he would sacrifice him with regret, but still he would sacrifice him, like all the others, to the Republic.

It is very probable that this was the light in which Robespierre viewed himself, and that he thus expressed his intentions.

Six days after the execution of the Hébertists, upon March 29th (9th of Germinal), there was a sudden outbreak of counter-revolutionary feeling in Paris. The downfall of the "ultras" had led many to think that the Terror was at an end, and there was talk of a revolt against the extreme Republican party.

That same evening Legendre rose at the Jacobins to protest against the widespread belief that such an anti-revolutionary project was to be attributed to his friends, "the indulgents." This well-meant but exceedingly ill-advised speech drew forth an open threat from Collot d'Herbois.

"Be calm!" he cried. "Such plans will be disappointed. We have caused a thunderbolt to fall upon the infamous men who deceived the people, we have torn the mask from them, but they are not the only ones! . . . We will tear away all possible masks. The 'indulgents' need not imagine that we have fought for them, that it is for them that we have held here these glorious sessions! Soon we shall know how to undeceive them."

On the following day, March 30th, an extraordinary meeting was convoked of the two great Committees, sitting together, as was their practice on important occa-



sions. The Committee of Legislation was also summoned, to give more authority still to the proceedings.

At this meeting, Saint-Just was the principal speaker. He denounced the Dantonists with all the force and eloquence at his command, charging them with "moderatism" and "reaction" in much the same terms as Camille himself had used in the accusations which he brought against the Girondins. Finally, he demanded the arrest of the whole party of the "indulgents."

Saint-Just's personality and the knowledge that he was Robespierre's mouthpiece swayed the united Committees, and they jointly signed the warrant for the arrest of the Dantonists. Only a very few had the courage to withhold their names; amongst them were Ruhl and Robert Lindet. At the close of the sitting, these two men sent Panis to warn Danton that the warrant was actually signed.

The perturbed messenger found Danton at home, sitting by the fire in his study. It is from M. Robinet that we learn how the great Tribune passed this, his last evening of freedom. He sat silently by the hearth, grave and preoccupied, with the glow of the flames falling upon his rugged face.

Maybe his thoughts had strayed to the days of his boyhood in Arcis, that pleasant, homely Arcis, where he had won back a little peace of mind but a few months before. It would perhaps have been well for Danton if he had not returned to his birthplace during those stormy autumn months of 1793; well for Danton if, having returned, he had remained there, far from the turmoil of the capital and the stress of party warfare.

The errand of Panis was fruitless. Even now Danton would not fly. He was disturbed by the news, we read; he paced with long strides up and down the room, muttering broken sentences to himself, and pausing now and then to embrace his nephew, but still he would not

seek a place of safety. He was sick of revolution and bloodshed—sick of life, if it must be bought at such a cost. It was thus that Danton awaited his arrest.

Meanwhile it was with a very heavy heart that Camille watched through the long hours of that March night. He had a more personal grief to sadden him than had Danton, something which, for a moment, outweighed those anxieties which had become customary and part of his life. Only that morning he had received a letter from his father, telling him that the mother, whom he so tenderly loved, was dead. It is long since Camille had seen his parents; in his letters he often speaks of a visit which he hopes to pay to them, but that visit, it seems, had never taken place. Yet the old tie of love uniting the parents and the son remained as strong as ever.

It has sometimes been asserted that Camille was on bad terms with his father, and it is true that the impetuous son was often irritated by what he considered, quite unjustly, to be coldness and lack of enthusiasm on the part of the elder man. In the days of his first great success Camille was apt to think that others, and especially the townsfolk of his birthplace, did not fully recognise his true worth and capabilities.

Yet this letter which the young man received on the eve of his arrest will prove to any unprejudiced reader that the bond between the father and the son had not been weakened by these little disagreements and misunderstandings in the past. These are the words of M. Desmoulins:—

“ My dear son, I have lost the half of myself. Your mother is no more. I have always hoped for her recovery, which has prevented me from telling you of her illness. She died to-day at noon. She is worthy of all our regrets; she loved you tenderly. I embrace your wife, my dear daughter-in-law, very affectionately and sorrowfully, and little Horace. I will write more to-morrow. I am always your best friend,

“ DESMOULINS.”

There was no sleep for Camille that night. Never the man to feel in moderation, or to take either sorrow or happiness calmly, he sat for hour after hour, overwhelmed with grief. We can fancy how Lucile laid aside her own heartache to soothe her husband's sorrow. Perhaps the remembrance of that very sorrow was a comfort to them both during the days which followed; it must have drawn them to each other very closely on this, the last night together.

At intervals during those restless, wakeful hours, after Lucile had at last gone to lie down in the adjoining room, Camille corrected the proofs of the seventh and last number of the "Vieux Cordelier" which had been sent back from the printers that day. The occupation served to distract his mind, to some extent, from his sorrow; the work was to be, as it were, his last will and testament.

At about six o'clock in the morning there was an unwonted disturbance in the usually quiet street. There rose to Camille's ears the sound of the tramp of heavy feet, and, a moment later, the clang of arms grounded on the cobbles at a word of command.

He flung open the window, and leaning out, looked down into the street. As he had expected, he saw that a patrol of soldiers was drawn up before his door. Camille was not unprepared for this; he knew only too well for what purpose they had come, and he went unhesitatingly into the adjoining room, where his wife lay asleep, with their little boy in his cradle at her side.

For a moment the young man must have hesitated as he looked down upon the peaceful face of the sleeping girl. But this news of his must be told and at once; there was no time to think of how it might be broken gently.

"They have come to arrest me," he said quietly, and Lucile started up at the words, scarcely awake, hardly understanding. . . .



The scene which followed can be better imagined than described. It was a scene which took place again and again in those days—days which witnessed so often the tearing apart of wives and husbands, of parents and children. Yet each fresh actor in that tragedy must have felt that he or she alone suffered its full bitterness, and surely this was the thought of Camille and Lucile as they clung together on that spring morning.

Their married life had been so completely happy, in spite of, nay, even because of, the trials and sorrows which surrounded them. Was it to end like this, cut short in a moment of time ?

Yet, mercifully, there can have been but little space for tears. Lucile was obliged to think of other things, to collect such clothes as Camille would need in prison, where even the barest necessities were not provided. It must all be done, even though their hearts were breaking, and we may be sure that Lucile forgot nothing which could add to the comfort of the man she loved. Camille hastily selected a couple of books and thrust them into the valise. Both were in English, and curiously indicative of his mood. They were Hervey's "Meditations among the Tombs" and Young's "Night Thoughts."

Then, for a moment, Camille knelt beside the cradle of the sleeping child, that little Horace, who was never really to know his young father. He kissed the baby very gently, his unnatural calmness almost giving way at the touch of the soft cheek, and turned to Lucile for one last embrace . . . the very last.

Camille left his wife, now mercifully scarcely conscious, and descended the stairs. He opened the door himself, and his captors surrounded him and bound his arms roughly, as though he had been a common malefactor. Then, while the startled, distressed neighbours stared from their windows and doorways, they led him away.

It was only a short distance from Camille's home to his prison. He was taken to the Luxembourg, once a palace, now a gaol. Here it is probable that he met Danton in the common ante-chamber before they were committed to separate cells. We know, at least, that Danton saw and spoke with Lacroix and Philippeaux, but there is no record of any conversation with Camille.

The journalist was imprisoned in a cell which overlooked the gardens of the Luxembourg; we can imagine that it was a sad joy to him to be able to see those lawns and terraces once more from the window of his prison.

Two days elapsed between the arrest of the Dantonists and their trial. The best account which we can possibly obtain of Camille's thoughts and actions during those forty-eight hours is to be found in the two letters which he wrote to Lucile from the Luxembourg. One cannot do better than give these letters almost in their entirety. They show Camille in his best and tenderest aspect; they are amongst the most pathetic love-letters in literature or history; it would be fair neither to the man nor to his genius to omit or to mutilate them.

The first was written on the day of his arrest. It is simply dated from the prison of the Luxembourg.

"My Lucile, my Vesta, my angel," Camille begins. "Destiny leads my eyes from my prison over that garden where I passed eight years in following you. A glimpse of the Luxembourg recalls to me a crowd of memories of my love. I am alone, but never deserted by thought, by imagination, almost by the sense of the bodily presence of you, of your mother, of my little Horace.

"I have only written this first letter to demand some necessary things. But I am going to pass all my time in prison in writing to you; because I have no need to take up my pen for my defence. My justification is complete in my eight Republican volumes. They are a good pillow, upon which my conscience reposes, awaiting the tribunal and posterity.

“Oh, my good Lolotte, speak of other things! I throw myself upon my knees, I extend my arms to embrace you, I find no more my poor Loulou. . . :

“Send me a water-glass, that one on which there is a ‘C’ and a ‘D’; our two names. Send me a pair of sheets, and a book in duodecimo which I bought a few days ago at Charpentier’s, and in which there are blank pages, made expressly for notes. This book treats of the immortality of the soul. I have need to persuade myself that there is a God, more just than men, and that I shall not fail to see thee again. Do not be too much affected by my ideas, dearest. I do not yet despair of men and of my liberation; yes, my well-beloved, we shall be able to meet yet once more in the garden of the Luxembourg! But send me that book. Farewell, Lucile! Farewell, Horace! I cannot embrace you, but, through the tears which I shed, it seems to me that I hold you still against my breast.”

On the following day Camille wrote again to Lucile, for the last time :—

“Kind slumber suspended my woes. One is free when one sleeps: one has no more the sense of captivity: heaven has had pity upon me. It was only for a moment that I saw you in a dream, I embraced you turn by turn, thou and Horace, but our little one had lost an eye through some affection which had settled there, and grief at this accident awoke me. I found myself in my cell; it was just beginning to grow light. Not being able to see thee any more and to hear thy replies, because thou and thy mother spoke to me, I rose, that I might at least speak to thee and write to thee. But, on opening my windows, the thought of my loneliness, the frightful barriers, the bolts which separate me from thee, have vanquished all my firmness of soul. I burst into tears, or rather I sobbed, crying in my tomb: ‘Lucile, Lucile, where art thou?’

“Yesterday, in the evening, I had a similar moment, and my heart was equally moved when I perceived thy mother in the gardens. An involuntary movement threw me on my knees against the barriers; I joined my hands as though imploring her pity, she, who mourned, I am certain, upon thy breast. I saw her sorrow yesterday by her handkerchief and by her veil, which she lowered, not being able to bear this spectacle.



When you both come, let her seat herself a little nearer with thee, that I may see you better. It seems to me that there is no danger. My spy-glass is not very good.

"But, above all, I implore thee send me the portrait; let thy painter have compassion on me, who only suffer for having had too much compassion for others; let him give thee two sittings a day. In the horror of my prison, the day when I receive thy portrait will be a festival, a day of merry-making and of joy. In the meanwhile, send me a lock of hair, that I may wear it against my heart. My dear Lucile! Behold me returned to the time of my first love for thee, when the mere fact that anyone came from thee was enough to interest me in him. To-day when the citizen who bore thee my letter had returned: 'Well, you have seen her?' I asked, as I used to say to the Abbé Laudréville, and I caught myself looking at him as though some sign of thee lingered about his clothes, upon his person. He has a charitable soul, since he has given thee my letter without erasures. I shall see him when he comes, twice a day, in the morning and the evening. This messenger of my sorrows becomes as dear to me as would formerly have been that of my pleasures.

"I have discovered a crack in the wall of my apartment; I applied my ear to it; I heard a sigh: I ventured to whisper a few words; I was answered by the voice of a sick man who suffered. He asked my name; I told it to him. 'Oh, my God!' he cried at that name, falling back upon his bed, from which he had raised himself, and I recognised distinctly the voice of Fabre d'Eglantine. 'Yes, I am Fabre,' he said to me. 'But thou here! The counter-revolution is then accomplished?'

"We did not dare, however, to speak together for fear that hatred would grudge us this feeble consolation, and that, if anyone should chance to overhear us, we should be separated and more strictly confined; because he has a chamber with a fireplace, and mine would be sufficiently comfortable if a cell could ever be called so.

"But, dearest, thou canst not imagine what it is to be in solitary confinement, without knowing for what reason, without having been interrogated, without receiving a single newspaper! It is to live and to be dead at one and the same time; it is only to exist to feel that one is in a tomb. It is said that innocence is calm, courageous. Ah, my dear Lucile,

my well-beloved ! Often then my innocence is feeble, as that of a father, that of a son, that of a husband !

“ If it was Pitt or Cobourg who treated me so severely ; but my colleagues !—but Robespierre, who has signed the order for my imprisonment—but the Republic, after all that I have done for her ! This is the reward which I receive for so many virtues and sacrifices for her sake !

“ When I entered here I saw Hérault-Séchelles, Simon, Ferroux, Chaumette, Antonelle ; they are less unhappy ; not one of them is in solitary confinement.

“ It is I who have called down upon myself for the past five years so many hatreds and perils for the sake of the Republic, I, who have preserved my poverty in the midst of the Revolution, I, who have only to ask pardon from thou alone in all the world, my dear Lolotte, and to whom thou hast accorded it, because thou knowest that my heart, in spite of all its faults, is not unworthy of thee ; it is I, whom the men who called themselves my friends, who called themselves Republicans, throw into a cell, alone, as though I were a conspirator. Socrates drank hemlock ; but at least he saw in his prison his friends and his wife. How much harder it is to be separated from thee ! The greatest criminal would be too severely punished if he were torn from a Lucile otherwise than by death, which, at least, only makes one feel for a moment the bitterness of such a separation ; but a guilty man would not have been thy husband and thou hast only loved me because I existed for nothing save the happiness of my fellow-countrymen.

“ They call for me. . . .

“ At this moment the commissaries of the Government came to interrogate me. Only this one question was put to me : If I had conspired against the Republic. What mockery, and how can they insult thus the most pure Republicanism ? I see the fate which awaits me. Adieu.

“ Thou seest in me an example of the barbarity and of the ingratitude of men. My last moments shall not dishonour thee. Thou seest that my fears were well-founded, that my presentiments were always true. I have married a wife celestial by her virtues ; I have been a good husband, a good son ; I would have been also a good father. I carry with me the esteem and the regrets of all true republicans, of all lovers of virtue and of liberty. I die at thirty-four years of age, but

It is a miracle that I have passed scatheless, during the last five years, over so many of the precipices of the Revolution, without falling, and that I still live; I rest my head calmly upon the pillow of my writings—too numerous—but which all breathe the same love of mankind, the same desire to render my fellow-countrymen happy and free, and which the axe of tyrants cannot touch. I see plainly that power intoxicates all men and that all say, like Dionysius of Syracuse: ‘Tyranny is fine epitaph.’

“But console thyself, desolate widow. The epitaph of thy poor Camille is more glorious: it is that of Brutus and of Cato, the tyrannicides.

“Oh, my dear Lucile, I was born to make verses, to defend the unhappy, to render thee happy, to compose with thy mother and thy father and a few more after our own heart, an *Otaheite*. I have dreamed of a Republic which all the world would have adored. I could not have believed that men were so fierce and so unjust. How could I think that some jests in my writings against the colleagues who provoked me would efface the remembrances of my services? I cannot hide from myself that I die the victim of those jests and of my friendship for Danton. I thank my assassins that they let me die with him and Philippeaux; and since my colleagues have been so cowardly as to abandon us and to lend ear to calumnies which I do not know, but which I am advised are of the gravest nature, I can say that we die the victims of our courage in denouncing two traitors and of our love for truth. We can bear with us this knowledge, that we perish the last of the Republicans.

“Pardon me, my dearest, my true life, that I lost when we were separated, if I occupy myself with my memories. I ought rather to strive to make you forget. My Lucile, my good Loulou! Live for Horace, speak to him of me. Thou wilt say to him what he cannot yet understand, that I would have loved him well. In spite of my sacrifice, I believe that there is a God. My blood will perhaps wash out my faults, which are the common weakness of humanity, and God will recompense me for the good which I have tried to do, for my virtues, my love of Liberty. I shall see thee again some day, oh, Lucile! Is death so great a misfortune since it delivers me, easily affected as I am, from the sight of so many crimes?

“Farewell, my life, my soul, my earthly divinity. I leave



thee to the care of good friends—all those amongst men who are virtuous and right-feeling. I perceive the shores of my life receding before me. I see still Lucile. I see thee, my well-beloved, my Lucile ! My bound hands embrace thee, and my severed head rests still upon thee its dying eyes.”

Lucile never received these last words of her husband. The Dantonists were removed to the Conciergerie during the night of April 1st (12th Germinal), and, on his arrival there, Camille gave the letter to one Citizen Grossé-Beaurepaire, a prisoner like himself, begging him, if possible, to deliver it. But this errand could never be performed ; the message passed from hand to hand, and remains to us now, after more than a century, as Camille’s best and most worthy testament, a letter so brave in its pathos that it makes one’s heart ache to think that it never reached its destination, never carried its message to Lucile’s loving soul.

The greater part of those two days in prison must have been spent by Camille in writing. The nervous, highly-strung man was on the verge of a breakdown, he was ill in mind and body alike, unable to sleep, unable to eat, tempted only by the soup which Lucile made with her own hands and sent to the Luxembourg. It was now that his profession came to his aid ; the journalist’s overwrought brain could find some relief, some relaxation in setting down on paper the thoughts which pressed upon him.

Besides the letters to Lucile, Camille wrote part of what was intended to be the eighth number of the “Vieux Cordelier.” These few somewhat disjointed passages remained unpublished, for obvious reasons, until 1834, when they were included by M. Matton in his edition of Camille’s works. They treat almost entirely of the danger of allowing one or more individuals to retain the dictatorship in the State for an indefinite period, and there is no ambiguity, nor any doubt as to whom Camille indicated in such words as those which follow. They show plainly enough that

arrest and imprisonment had not induced the journalist to change his opinions.

“Freemen! You desire to be free—be so then, in very truth: do not content yourselves with the liberty of the moment, seek also to secure your future enfranchisement. You have cast forth your Tarquin, you have done more; his execution has affrighted all kings, those pretended masters of the world, who are only its tyrants and despoilers. But why does the power of Brutus last more than a year? . . . Why is it to individuals that one owes one’s preservation, instead of to the Republic?”

According to Jules Claretie, Camille wrote to Robespierre from the Luxembourg, but the historian gives no proof of this assertion, and it would seem to be contradicted by the testimony of Charlotte Robespierre, as contained in her “Memoirs”:—

“My brother loved Camille Desmoulins dearly,” she says, “they having studied together: and when he learned of his arrest and incarceration at the Luxembourg, he went to the prison that he might beg Camille to return to the true Revolutionary principles which he had abandoned for an alliance with the Royalists. Camille would not see him; and my brother, who would probably have assumed his defence, and perhaps saved him, if he could have persuaded him to abjure his political heresies, abandoned him to the terrible justice of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Now Danton and Camille were so intimately connected that he could not have saved the one without the other; if, therefore, Camille had not repulsed him, when he held out his hand to him, Camille and Danton would not have perished. . . . Desmoulins published his ‘Vieux Cordelier,’ in which he arraigned all the Revolutionists and, in consequence, the Revolution. This was worse than a great imprudence on his part—it was a crime. My elder brother said sorrowfully to me on this subject, ‘Camille is ruining himself’; he took up his defence several times; several times also he tried to reclaim him, and spoke to him as a brother, but in vain. . . . Despite his immense popularity and extraordinary influence his words (in defence of Camille) were received with murmurs. Then he saw that by trying to save Camille he was working his own ruin.”

It is in that last sentence that Charlotte Robespierre gives the key to all her brother's conduct, as we judge it. The remainder of this piece of special pleading is full of obvious misstatements. It is idle to assert, for instance, that Robespierre was not a party to the publication of the "Vieux Cordelier." We have too many irrefutable witnesses to prove that the paper was indeed originally his own project, and that he passed the proofs of, at least, the first three numbers.

It is perhaps natural that his sister should believe that, had he met with encouragement, Maximilian would have taken up the defence of Camille and Danton, but the statement does not, unfortunately, carry conviction. Neither does it seem probable that Robespierre, as Charlotte infers, heard with consternation that Camille was imprisoned, since he himself had signed the warrant for the arrest of the journalist and his colleagues.

We know that Lucile tried to see her husband's one-time friend and plead with him for Camille's life. That interview she could not obtain, but the letter which she wrote to Robespierre is still extant—a letter almost incoherent, but with terrible truth in every line of it.

"That hand which so often pressed yours, forsook the pen before its time, because it could no longer hold it to trace your praises. And you have sent him to death! You have then understood his silence!"

The preliminary interrogations of the prisoners took place at the Luxembourg on the morning of the 12th Germinal (April 2nd), Camille being the first to be questioned. On this occasion, as we have read in his letter to Lucile, besides a few formal questions as to his name, address and profession, the journalist was asked only whether he "had conspired against the French nation by wishing to restore the Monarchy, by destroying the National Representation and the



Republican Government ? ” At this interrogation the advocate, Chauveau de Lagarde, was nominated as Camille’s counsel.

In the meantime public opinion had been stunned by the arrest of the Dantonists ; very few of their former friends had been daring enough to plead for them in public. At the meeting of the Convention on the 11th Germinal one man only rose to speak in their favour. This was Legendre, the eloquent, stentorian-voiced master-butcher, whom Camille had, on one occasion, compared to Demosthenes.

“ Citizens,” he cried, “ four members of this assembly have been arrested to-day : I know that Danton is one of them ; I am ignorant of the names of the others ; but, whoever they may be, I demand that they be heard at this bar. Citizens, I declare that I believe Danton to be as innocent as I am myself ! ”

But brave as were Legendre’s words, his courage was not of the lasting order. On being coldly reproved by Robespierre, he hesitated, stammered, and finally apologised for what he had said on his first generous impulse. For Robespierre and his party did not intend for one instant that Danton should be given the opportunity to defend himself before the Convention, which he had so often swayed by his words. It was the Revolutionary Tribunal and no other which was to judge and condemn the “ Indulgents.”

After Robespierre had scared Legendre into silence, after he had spoken at length upon the cultivation of the Republican virtues, upon the necessity that the few should suffer for the good of the many, Saint-Just rose to speak. He read a Report relating to the crimes and treasons of the Dantonists with that austere conviction which so often concealed the falseness of his premises.

“ The Republic is the people and not the renown of a few men ! ” he declared, and went on to denounce each one of the accused by name. It is unnecessary to

examine this speech at length ; it was an astounding tissue of lies and misrepresentations, woven with subtle skill upon a foundation of half-truths. Philippeaux, Lacroix, Hérault—Saint-Just attacked each in turn. Camille he dismissed contemptuously as “a dupe first, and afterwards an accomplice—wanting in character”—yet he proceeded to calumniate him most grossly. It was Danton, finally, whom the orator attacked with the most bitter venom, accusing him of all imaginable crimes, public and private.

Yet Saint-Just, by the sheer force of personality, carried the cowed Assembly with him. At the close of the Report, an almost unanimous decree of accusation was passed against the Dantonists.

On the following day, April 1st (12th Germinal), this accusation was read to the prisoners, previous to their removal to the Conciergerie.

The accused men were brought together for the first time on this occasion. Fabre d'Eglantine was sick almost to death, Chabot in no better case, for he had taken poison in his cell, Philippeaux, calm and composed as ever, whilst Hérault, his personal charm unchanged to the last, embraced and thanked a faithful servant, who was not permitted to accompany him to the Conciergerie.

Danton heard the iniquitous report with unmoved contempt, but Camille was furious at the calumnies brought against him by Saint-Just. He raged and stormed until rebuked by Danton, after which he managed to compose himself. We are told that he murmured, with quivering lips: “I go then to the scaffold, because I have shed tears at the fate of so many unhappy people. My only regret, in dying, is that I have not been able to serve them better.”

The prisoners were transferred to the Conciergerie, that ante-chamber to the Revolutionary Tribunal, where they were confined together in the same cell which the Girondins had occupied six months before.

It was on their arrival here that Danton used the words which have since become famous.

"It was on such a day that I instituted the Revolutionary Tribunal. I ask pardon for it from God and man! My aim was to prevent fresh September massacres, not to establish a scourge for humanity." Then, speaking of Robespierre and his colleagues, he said bitterly: "These Cains know nothing of government. I leave everything in a frightful muddle." And he added: "It were better to be a poor fisherman than to rule men."

During this short time in the Conciergerie, Camille composed the "Notes upon the Report of Saint-Just," which were to be his last written words. There is bitter anger in this defence, yet, beneath it all, we can plainly read his despair.

"If I could only print in my turn," he begins. . . . "If they would leave me only two days in which to compose No. 7, how I would confound M. le Chevalier Saint-Just! . . . But Saint-Just writes at his leisure, in his bath, in his dressing-room; he meditates on my assassination for fifteen days; and I, I have nowhere even to place my writing-case; I have only a few hours left in which to defend my life. . . . But there is a Providence, a Providence for Patriots, and already I can die contented: the Republic is saved. . . . It is proved by many decisive facts that those who accuse us are themselves the conspirators.

"I come to that which concerns me personally in this Report. There has been no such atrocious example of calumny as this piece of work within the memory of man. And in the first place there is no one in the Convention who does not know that M. the heretofore Chevalier Saint-Just has sworn implacable hatred against me, because of a light pleasantry which I permitted myself five months ago in one of my numbers. . . . I put Saint-Just into a jesting newspaper paragraph, and, in return, he puts me into a murderous report, where, with regard to me, there is not one word of truth."

In this, and all the rest of Camille's defence, eloquent and impassioned as it is, we feel that the writer did not



hope for acquittal, that he knew himself and his colleagues to be already judged and condemned, since they had fallen into the hands of these, their enemies.

Yet their condemnation was to be no easy task. Fouquier-Tinville was busy preparing the case against the Dantonists, and perhaps it is scarcely fair to blame the astute Public Prosecutor for the futility of much of his evidence. The work was almost beyond his power. It was no light matter to be called upon to bring forward irrefragable proofs that Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Héroult, Westermann—the heroes of the Bastille and of August 10th—were Royalists, conspirators and traitors to the Republic.

## V

**T**HE Dantonists were brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, in the Salle de Liberté of the Palais de Justice, on April 2nd (13th Germinal), at eleven o'clock in the morning. The accused were sixteen in number, including the Alsatian, General Westermann, who had only been arrested that same day.

There was distinct method in the apparently promiscuous way in which the prisoners were herded together. Firstly, there was the party of the "Indulgents," Danton, Camille, Philippeaux, Héault, Lacroix and Westermann, and, included in the same indictment with them, were a number of men accused of bribery, forgery and other criminal offences against the Government. These were Fabre d'Eglantine, Delaunay, Chabot, the two Freys, Bazire, Despagnac, Lhuillier, Guzman and Diederichsen.

There is no doubt that this measure, by which at least three distinct groups of persons, having absolutely no connection with each other, were committed for trial together, was adopted deliberately by the Revolutionary Tribunal, acting on the authority of the Committees of Government. Here is the affirmation of Nicolas-Joseph Pâris (nicknamed Fabricius), registrar to the Tribunal, given in his evidence at the trial of Fouquier-Tinville.

"This refinement of perfidy," he says, "was often made use of by the Committees and oftener by Fouquier, confounding men of the highest probity, the most intrepid defenders of our liberty, with mean scoundrels and declared enemies of the Revolution."

Herman was the President of the Tribunal, of which the other members were Masson-Denizot, Foucault and Bravet. Fouquier-Tinville held, of course, the position of Public Prosecutor, and his deputy was Fleuriot-Lescot. The jurors were most carefully selected by Fouquier himself. Pâris tells us that the Public Prosecutor asked for the jury-list and, when it was brought to him, after making a cross beside several names, he marked another with the letter "F." On Pâris enquiring what this meant, Fouquier answered: "It signifies 'faible.' He is fond of reasoning, and we don't want people who reason, we want this business done with." Then, staring at the registrar fixedly, the Public Prosecutor added: "Moreover, it is what the Committee of Public Safety wills."

These well-chosen jurymen were Trinchard, Leroy (nicknamed Dix-Août), Lumière, Souberbielle, Desboisseaux and Renaudin. The last-named was challenged by Camille at the opening of the trial, and apparently on good grounds, but the Tribunal disregarded his appeal.

In a volume entitled "*Anecdotes inédites de la fin du dix-huitième siècle*," there is a curious story relating to one of the jurors at the trial of the Dantonists, whose name is not given. The author of the book tells us that this jurymen was an intimate friend of Camille's, and that, whilst he was in the court, the journalist never took his eyes from his face; he seemed to say: "Would you dare condemn me?"

Against his heart and his conscience the juror voted for the death of Camille and his colleagues, but, not long after, he was overcome by remorse at what he had done. The health of the unfortunate man completely broke down: he brooded incessantly over the terrible result of his action, and he is reported to have said despairingly to a friend, who enquired of him the reason of his misery: "I have assassinated my friend, and I cannot live; I am torn by remorse. Camille is



perpetually before my eyes ; even now, while I am speaking to you, he is there—I see him, I hear him . . . he reproaches me with my barbarity, and yet I live ! ”

Our best account of the process of the Dantonists is contained in the vivid, hasty notes of Topino-Lebrun, the artist. He had been nominated on the jury, but was not called upon to serve. He remained in the court, however, and wrote down his impressions of the proceedings as they passed.

One by one the prisoners made answer to Herman's formal interrogations, each according to his nature.

Danton's reply thunders down to us, typical alike of the man and the epoch.

“ My name is Georges-Jacques Danton, formerly a lawyer, afterwards a Revolutionist and representative of the people. My dwelling will soon be in nothingness, after that, in the Pantheon of history.”

Camille's answer is even better known ; we have discussed it more fully in an earlier chapter.

“ I am thirty-three, the age of the sansculotte Jesus, when he died ; a critical age for every patriot.”

Hérault replied with the easy lightness which he preserved throughout : “ I am called Marie-Jean—hardly a striking name, even among the Saints. I sat in this hall and was detested by Parliamenteers.”

Westermann, after protesting against this arraignment, since he did not even know what was his indictment, made answer in a soldierly fashion, worthy of his high military reputation.

“ I am from Strasburg, a soldier from my infancy. I shall demand to be shown naked to the people that they may see me. I have seven wounds, all in front : I have received only one behind—my act of accusation.”

Danton appealed in the beginning against the injustice which endeavoured to implicate himself and his friends with the conspiracies of perjurers and forgers, but his protest was disregarded.

This first day of the trial was mainly occupied in the examination of Chabot, Bazire, the Freys and De-launay, accused of financial offences. Herman and his colleagues were apprehensive and nervous ; very disinclined to come to the real business in hand. They dreaded, and with reason, the effect which Danton's eloquence might have upon the crowds who thronged the hall.

Yet, in spite of all their efforts, he succeeded in obtaining a hearing late in the day. He rose to demand that a Committee, composed of members of the Convention, should be nominated to hear the protests which he, Camille and Philippeaux wished to make against the dictatorial methods of the Committee of Public Safety. The Tribunal was not by any means prepared to accede to this request ; nevertheless no valid reasons could be given for refusal, and to evade the necessity for answering decisively, Herman hastily broke up the sitting for that day.

He then immediately went with Fouquier to take counsel with the Committee of Public Safety as to whether it was necessary to subpœna the witnesses of the accused ; the only members present were Saint-Just and Billaud-Varennes. It was decided that no answer should be given to the demands of the prisoners, but that, by some means or other, the sittings must be spun out until the three days had elapsed, after which, according to the rules of the Tribunal, the jurors might declare themselves sufficiently instructed to give a verdict without further evidence.

On this second day, as Pâris tells us, the hearing began very late. There had been many strange, heroic, amazing trials before the Tribunal, but never one like this. It was not possible to postpone Danton's examination any longer ; he rose now to speak, to justify himself before the people.

And the people were there, to hear his defence. The Court was crowded to overflowing, a dense throng

filled the Cour des Pas Perdus, and the Cour du Harlay. It extended outside, all around the walls of the Palais de Justice, and beyond along the Quais, crowding the Place Dauphine and reaching from thence to the Pont Neuf and the Mint.

Each incident within the hall was repeated and repeated again from mouth to mouth in this packed, agitated mob, uneasy, they scarcely knew why, vaguely terrified at the sense of something portentous which, it seemed to them, was about to come to pass. Almost incredible as it may appear, we have it on the authority of many witnesses that Danton's great voice could be heard, through the open windows of the Court, even as far as the opposite bank of the Seine, when he raised it now and again in protest or indignation.

And this was the voice which had so often called these self-same people to arms, it was the voice which had mustered the levies to destroy the Army of the Coalition, which had sounded like a tocsin on August 10th, that terrible day of vengeance. This voice had had the power to move the Parisian mob again and again . . . it had the power to move it still. Backwards and forwards the crowd swayed, excited almost unbearably, ready for almost anything. It needed but a word to make them rise and carry the prisoners in triumph from the court—and that word might come at any moment.

It is Danton's personality which dominates the whole of the proceedings henceforth. There is a rough but lifelike engraving which represents the great Tribune as he appeared on this day. He stands in the dock, towering above his companions, like a lion at bay—the hackneyed metaphor rises involuntarily to one's lips in speaking of Danton—with head thrown back and collar open at the throat, his hair in wild disorder, and on his lips a smile of fierce disdain. Never did a man defend his life in such a fashion. With even more than his old energy and audacity of



phrase and gesture he alternately browbeat and mocked at his accusers, crushing them beneath the weight of his just anger and his terrible scorn.

They accused him of having been bought by the Court ; he interrupted their words with a veritable shout of indignation :

“ I sold ? A man of my stamp is priceless ! . . . Let him who accuses me to the Convention produce the proofs, the semi-proofs, the faintest signs of my venality ! . . . I have laboured too much ; I am sick of life : it is a burden to me.”

In violent, trenchant words he held up to scorn the insinuations brought against him of cowardice upon the day of August 10th and contemptuously rebutted the accusation that he was the paid supporter of Mirabeau—D’Orléans—Dumouriez—each and all of those who had played for supremacy in the Republic and lost. He boasted—yet it was no boast but the simple truth—that he would willingly embrace his enemy for the sake of his country, for which he would give his body to be devoured.

There is insight in the words in which Danton summed up certain of his contemporaries.

“ Marat had a fiery nature,” he said. “ Robespierre is tenacious and firm—and I—I was useful after my own fashion.”

Again and again Herman interrupted this torrent of words.

“ Danton,” he said, “ audacity is no proof of innocence. Your defence should be made in a more orderly manner.”

Then, as the accused man persisted in his loud justification, and the galleries buzzed with sympathy and half-suppressed applause, the President grew more and more agitated and indignant.

“ Do you not hear my bell ? ” he cried.

“ A man defending his life despises your bell, and cries aloud,” Danton shouted back defiantly.

Danton had spoken no mere empty words at the beginning of his examination.

"Provided that we are allowed to speak and to speak freely," he had said, "I am sure to confound my accusers, and if the French people are what they ought to be, I shall be obliged to ask for pardon for the rascals."

Camille, according to Topino-Lebrun, echoed these words.

"Ah, we shall be allowed to speak!" he cried. "That is all we ask," and the juror adds that the accused deputies showed signs of great and heartfelt joy.

It was small wonder that Herman trembled, that Fouquier-Tinville trembled, that the whole Tribunal dreaded what would be the outcome of all this. The "Indulgents" might yet escape condemnation—unless Danton could be silenced.

No easy task this. Louder and louder rose his voice, as he demanded that Billaud-Varennes and certain others should be called as witnesses. The Tribunal refused this, which every accused man might be thought to have the right to demand, and there is real and unaffected dignity in Danton's answer, choking with rage as he was.

"I am refused witnesses; very well, I will not defend myself any more. I have also to apologise for any unnecessary warmth I may have shown; it is my disposition."

Herman saw his opportunity and seized it. Protesting hypocritically that Danton appeared to be exhausted, he declared that the remainder of his defence must be postponed until the following day, and incontinently broke up the sitting.

Throughout this day certain members of the Committee of General Security, Amar, Vouland and Vadier, had listened to all the proceedings from a place of concealment in an adjoining room. They

shared the fears of the judges as to the outcome of the trial, and were equally determined that Danton and his colleagues must somehow be silenced.

On the following day (the 15th Germinal) it was again very late before the court was convoked. Although Danton demanded to be heard again at once, Herman passed on to the examination of certain of the other prisoners. After Hérault came the turn of Camille, and we can gather plainly enough the course which his cross-examination took from his answers as reported in Topino-Lebrun's notes, scrappy and disjointed as they are.

"At the time of my dispute with Saint-Just the latter said that he would kill me. . . . I denounced Dumouriez before Marat. D'Orléans first. I commenced the Revolution; my death will end it. . . . Marat was deceived in Proly. . . . What man is there who has not had his Dillon? . . . Since the Fourth Number I have written only to retract. . . . I have been encouraged, written to. . . . Have unmasked the Hébert faction. It is a good thing that someone did it."

Furthermore certain passages from the "Vieux Cordelier" were read, in which Camille (and with reason) was accused of having scoffed at the Convention and the Committees. It does not appear that Chauveau de Lagarde, who had been appointed the journalist's counsel, spoke on his behalf, but Camille, as we have seen, had prepared a written defence against the accusations in Saint-Just's report, which, however, he was to be given no opportunity to read.

Herman then proceeded with the examination of Lacroix, but the accused man obstinately demanded that certain witnesses should be called in his defence.

Fouquier-Tinville replied that he could not summon them, since they were members of the Convention, but this answer did not satisfy any of the prisoners. They protested indignantly against the injustice of this treatment, and a tumult arose in the court. The President tried vainly to interrogate Westermann,



he Freys and Guzman; he was constantly interrupted, especially by Danton, who never ceased to demand that their witnesses should be called. At last Fouquier rose to make an apparently reasonable proposal.

"It is time to put a stop to this brawl," he said. "It is a scandal both to the Tribunal and to those who hear you. I will write to the Convention and ask what its wishes are; they will be exactly carried out."

This was more or less what the accused men desired; they declared themselves satisfied, and the examination proceeded more quietly.

Fouquier indeed immediately despatched a letter, but not, as he had promised, to the Convention. He wrote to the Committee of Public Safety, employing exaggerated and unjustifiable language to gain his purpose.

"A terrible tumult has been raging ever since the sitting began," he wrote. "The maddened prisoners claim the hearing of their witnesses. . . . They appeal to the public from the refusal which they pretend to have met with, in spite of the firmness of the President and of the entire Tribunal; their protestations disturb the sitting, and they declare loudly that they will not be silent until their witnesses are heard. . . . We request you to trace our line of conduct for us definitely, as the judiciary order furnishes us with no means whatever for justifying this refusal. . . . We foresee that the only way to make them keep silence would be by a decree."

It will be seen that even Fouquier does not pretend that the act which he contemplated was lawful—it was merely expedient.

On receipt of this letter from the Public Prosecutor, the members of the Committee were undecided as to their course of action: Saint-Just alone persisted that it was necessary to refuse the demands of the accused at all costs. Yet some pretext was necessary; some means must be found of putting the prisoners to silence. It was not until the end of the third day

that the jurors could declare themselves satisfied, and, in the meantime, who knew what might happen, if Danton was permitted to speak freely. A pretext was ready to the hand of the Committee, and, infamous as it was, the members did not hesitate to avail themselves of it.

Arthur Dillon, who played the part of an unwilling evil genius in the lives of Camille and his wife, was at this time a prisoner in the Luxembourg, having been rearrested shortly before this date. It is very probable that Lucile wrote to the General after Camille's arrest; he owed a great deal to her husband's efforts and might be expected to be ready to serve him by every means in his power. It is quite likely, moreover, that Dillon formed a plan to incite the populace to attack the Palais de Justice and release the prisoners, and, since he had plenty of money in his possession, he may have decided to distribute it judiciously to serve his purpose.

Whatever his plans may or may not have been, it is said that the ex-general, under the influence of drink, talked freely and unwisely to one Laflotte, a fellow-prisoner, who had formerly been ambassador to Florence. This man resolved to betray Dillon, in the hope of receiving his own freedom as a reward, and he confided his intention to Captain Amans, one of those infamous prison spies or "moutons" who owed their existence to the system of terror.

Laflotte and Amans wrote to the Committee of Public Safety on April 2nd and were conducted to the Tuileries and cross-examined on the subject. They exaggerated and misrepresented the affair, so as to make it appear as an organised prison conspiracy. Laflotte stated that Dillon had told him that it was time for good Republicans to make a stand against idle oppressors, that, if Danton was able to hold his own at the Tribunal, his condemnation was by no means assured, and that a large sum of money had been

remitted to Lucile Desmoulins, in order that she might have the means of stirring up the people to revolt.

At her trial Lucile expressly denied that she had received any money from Dillon. Moreover, it is inconceivable that she was engaged in any organised conspiracy at this time. Her one idea was how she might save Camille. She had wandered round the Luxembourg for hour after hour, in the hope of seeing him, she had written to, and sought interviews with, those in authority, she had snatched at any and every means by which she might obtain her husband's release, but very certainly she had no room in her thoughts for these schemes of "overturning the Republic," "of setting the son of Louis XVI upon the throne," whereof she was accused.

It mattered very little to Saint-Just and his colleagues whether the information which they had received was true or false. The hint of a "prison conspiracy" was always sufficient to scare the Convention into submission, moreover it was the one thing calculated to thoroughly alarm the mob.

Accordingly on the afternoon of this same day of 15th Germinal, Saint-Just and Billaud-Varennes hastened to the Convention, and the former demanded an immediate hearing, in order that he might make a report in the names of the two Government Committees.

"The Public Prosecutor at the Revolutionary Tribunal," so this document began, "has informed us that the revolt of the culprits has caused the proceedings of justice to be suspended until the National Convention shall have deliberated."

The whole report did great credit to the ingenuity of Saint-Just. Even the natural anger of the accused men was made to appear unwarrantable and even criminal. Could sophistry go further than in this phrase?



“What innocent man ever rebelled against the laws? We want no other proofs of their criminal attempts than this audacity.”

Saint-Just then went on to speak of the supposed prison conspiracy.

“Dillon, who ordered his army to march upon Paris, has declared that the wife of Desmoulins has received money in order to promote a rising for the assassination of patriots, and of the Revolutionary Tribunal.”

Finally the report practically demanded that the Convention should adopt the accompanying decree, which ran as follows:—

“The National Convention orders that the Revolutionary Tribunal shall proceed with the instruction relating to the conspiracy of Lacroix, Danton, Chabot and others. The President shall make use of every means which the law permits to cause his authority and that of the Revolutionary Tribunal to be respected, and to repress every attempt on the part of the accused to trouble public tranquillity and to hinder the course of justice.

“It is decreed that all persons accused of conspiracy who shall resist or insult the national justice shall be outlawed and receive judgment on the spot.”

This decree was adopted by the whole Convention unanimously, so completely were even the friends of Danton cowed into submission at this moment. Vouland and Amar were immediately despatched with it to the Palais de Justice.

Meanwhile things had not gone well at the Tribunal, as far as Fouquier and his associates were concerned. Danton had resumed his defence, and again his voice and words stirred the emotions of the crowd. Westermann also had made an impression on the people, justifying himself quietly and simply, like the valiant soldier that he was.

It was at this vital moment that the emissaries of

the Committee of General Security arrived with the decree. Pâris has graphically described the scene.

"They were pale," he says. "Anger and terror were painted on their countenances, so much did they fear that their victims would escape death. . . . Vouland said: 'We have them, the scoundrels; they were conspiring at the Luxembourg.' They sent for Fouquier, who was in the court. He appeared at once. On seeing him, Amar said: 'Here is what you want.' It was the decree of outlawry. Vouland said: 'Here is something to put you at ease.' Fouquier replied, with a smile: 'We wanted it badly enough.' He re-entered the court with an air of satisfaction, and read aloud the decree."

One can faintly imagine the horror and indignation of the prisoners on hearing this infamous proclamation. Danton sprang to his feet.

"I take my hearers to witness," he cried, "that we have not insulted the Tribunal!"

There was a murmur of assent from many of those present, and Herman dreaded that some demonstration might be made in favour of the prisoners. Confident in the support of the Convention, he ordered that the accused men were to be at once removed from the court, such an order literally amounting to outlawry. It was in vain that the prisoners vehemently protested.

"It is infamous!" cried Lacroix. "We are judged without being heard."

"No documents have been produced against us," shouted Danton. "Neither have any witnesses been called."

The members of the Committee of General Security who had brought the decree to the Tribunal now entered the hall, their whole bearing full of ill-concealed triumph. Danton's eyes fell upon them, and he pointed them out to his companions, exclaiming with bitter scorn:

"Look at those cowardly assassins; they will hunt us to death!"

Unhappy Camille had an even more terrible cause

for distress than his own imminent death. He had listened with horror as Fouquier read Saint-Just's iniquitous decree, had heard, with almost incredulous agony, that Lucile was to be involved in his own fall.

"The wretches—the infamous wretches!" he groaned. "Not content with killing me, they will murder my wife also!"

Camille's self-possession gave way entirely under this new blow. In a fury of anger he tore up his now useless defence and flung the fragments into Fouquier's face. When the guards came to remove the prisoners from the court, he clung to his seat and refused to leave the dock with his companions. It became necessary at last for three men to drag him from his place and practically to carry him from the hall.

The prisoners were taken back to the Conciergerie and confined in separate cells. The crowds in the hall of the Tribunal and in the surrounding streets dispersed moodily. Notwithstanding the arbitrary methods of the Committees, notwithstanding the decree of the Convention, it was by no means certain that these measures would be successful. It was whispered that the jury would not agree—that the majority of them would be in favour of acquittal.

But Fouquier, Herman and their colleagues were not to be balked when their victory was so nearly won. Next morning, the 16th Germinal, the members of the Committee of General Security went to the Palais de Justice, as Pâris tells us, before nine o'clock and held a consultation in the Public Prosecutor's private room. Herman and Fouquier then went to the jury-room, and we are told, again on the authority of Pâris, that the two men deliberately set themselves to persuade and threaten the jurors into declaring that they were satisfied with the evidence.

Their task was accomplished before the court was declared open. Lhuillier alone of all the prisoners was acquitted. The rest were to die that same day.



The accused men were not summoned again before the Tribunal: Herman and Fouquier doubted, reasonably enough, their ability to control Danton; they feared the effect of his wrath and indignation. Accordingly it had been decreed that in consequence of the "indecorum, the sneers and the blasphemies of the accused in the presence of the Tribunal, the questions be submitted to the jury and the intervening judgment pronounced in the absence of the accused."

Judgment was already pronounced. Even before the jury had given their verdict the death-sentence had been virtually passed and the compositors were setting it up in type, in order that it might be published immediately throughout Paris.

The Dantonists themselves knew well what that inevitable judgment would be. They awaited it on the whole calmly.

One by one they were taken to the waiting-room of the Conciergerie to hear their sentences of death read to them by the clerk, Ducray. All of them refused to listen to that iniquitous pronouncement of judicial murder.

"It is useless," said Danton sternly. "You may as well take us at once to the guillotine. I will not listen to your judgment. We are assassinated; that is enough."

Camille, crouched in a corner of his cell, sat with his face buried in his arms, his body shaken by sobs. From time to time broken sentences escaped him: "Lucile . . . my little Horace. . . . Oh, my beloved! . . . What will become of them?"

It must be remembered, before one calls him weak or unmanly, what poignant cause Camille had for grief—nay, almost for despair. It was not only the thought of his own death which he must needs face—though that, to a man as keenly alive as Camille, can be no light matter—but he knew also only too well that Lucile, his beloved Lucile, stood in the same peril as himself.

One must not forget, moreover, in judging Camille, that almost from the first he had realised to what goal his campaign of clemency would lead—and, knowing it, had yet persisted to the end.

Camille was no stoic ; he was only a helpless man, broken down in mind and body by all that he had passed through, a husband who saw his wife about to die for his sake, a father who pictured his baby son left desolate. This, then, was the end of it all. Never again would he feel the fierce exultation of popular triumph, the intense pleasure of the writer in fashioning the perfect phrase ; above all, never more would he know the closer and more intimate joys of his home life—never sit with Lucile, they two alone together in the flickering firelight. . . . Can we wonder if Camille wept ?—Heaven knows he had paid dearly enough for the right to shed those tears.

It was but a short space in those days which elapsed between the passing of the sentence and its fulfilment. Short enough—yet the hours of that spring day must have seemed long to those who awaited their death.

It was late in the afternoon when Sanson and his assistants came to make the last preparations. Poor Camille resisted impotently even now ; before they could bind his arms and cut away his hair and the collar of his shirt, the executioners were obliged to tie him to a chair. He only calmed himself when Danton, at his request, placed in his pinioned hands a locket which contained a tress of Lucile's hair.

At five o'clock two tumbrils, drawn by huge grey Normandy horses, waited before the Conciergerie. A vast crowd were assembled around the gates of the prison to see the Dantonists pass out to their death. One by one the condemned men entered the carts and seated themselves upon the rough benches fixed against the sides. All of them were bareheaded and in their shirt-sleeves, with their arms firmly bound.

Danton was the last to ascend the leading tumbril,

following immediately after Camille. Fabre d'Eglantine was so weak that he could scarcely sit upright, and Danton took the place next to him, so that his broad chest served as a support for the sick man, and prevented him from falling from his seat when the jolting of the carts over the rough cobbles of the Rue Saint-Honoré threw the prisoners against each other. On the other side was Camille, trembling with his efforts to keep calm. His white, drawn face and the scared, piteous look in his eyes arrested the attention of many onlookers.

And between the two sat Danton, steady as a rock, and as rugged and unmoved. Those broad shoulders of his which had borne the weight of so many burdens now formed a physical support for his weaker companions, even as his strong courage nerved them morally.

In the same tumbril was Hérault, he who had been called the handsomest man in France, aristocratic Hérault de Séchelles, once a courtier and the friend of kings and queens. It might have been to some great Court function that they led Hérault to-day, if one had judged only by his unmoved face and gallant bearing. Philippeaux, who, like Camille, was leaving a devoted wife and a young child, bore himself as a brave and honest man, while Westermann, in the second tumbril, faced death like a soldier, firm-lipped, with a stern, set face.

The crowd surrounding the death-carts was enormous; it surged against them in great waves, impeding their progress and forcing the horses, led by the executioner's assistants, to go with extreme slowness. And the vast mob was not silent; it had neither respect nor pity for these men who were so soon to die. Probably many amongst the crowd were hired by the authorities to lead, as it were, the chorus of imprecation and abuse. The Committees feared the fickleness of the mob; they dreaded that some



voice might be raised in pity, to recall the services of these one-time leaders, and every precaution was taken to stifle such a cry before it could make itself heard.

Fierce curses, unspeakable insults rose from that escort of almost dehumanised men and women. Danton eyed them with unspeakable scorn; he would not deign to appeal to those blind fools to spare his life, since gratitude was dead in them. Hérault, Lacroix and Philippeaux seemed oblivious to all that passed around them; Fabre was in a state of semi-stupor.

But Camille—poor Camille! He remembered too well the day when this same Parisian crowd, perchance these very men and women, had carried him shoulder-high from the Palais Royal, proclaiming him as their saviour, the leader of the Revolution.

The change in them seemed to him incredible: he could not, even now, believe that men could be so cruel—so oblivious of past services. Surely—surely they would not let him die. . . .

“You are deceived, citizens,” he cried, his voice strained and hoarse. “Citizens! it is your preservers who are being sacrificed. It was I—I, who on July 12th called you first to arms! I first proclaimed liberty. . . . My sole crime has been pity. . . .”

Then, as the mob only answered him with jeers and derision, his appeals changed to threats—he hurled back insults, he struggled impotently against his bonds, struggled so that his thin shirt was torn to shreds, exposing his chest and shoulders. It was a piteous sight—yet it moved the crowd to nothing save mocking laughter.

Then Danton spoke with rough kindness.

“Be quiet!” he said to the desperate, almost exhausted man at his side. “Be quiet then; leave this vile rabble alone.”

It would seem that the words of the greater man

partially calmed Camille; he grew quieter as the tumbrils passed slowly and yet more slowly through the thickening throng.

Only once again he broke out. In the Rue Saint-Honoré they passed a silent, shuttered house: it was the house of Duplay, and within Robespierre sat in his darkened room, pale and silent, whilst the man who had been his boyhood's friend passed by to his death.

And at sight of those closed, dumb windows Camille drew himself upright in the tumbril—shouted at the top of his hoarse, weak voice, so that his words must surely have reached Robespierre's ears.

"My assassins will not long survive me!" he cried.

Slowly the tumbrils entered the Place de la Révolution. Over the heads of the crowd, close-packed in the great square, the condemned men could see the instrument of their death reared on the spot where the obelisk now stands. Above it rose an enormous plaster statue of Liberty, silhouetted against the rose-flushed sky, and the rays of the setting sun tinged the portentous image and the guillotine itself with stains like blood.

The carts reached the foot of the scaffold; the prisoners descended from them one by one. Hérault was the first of the "Indulgents" to die. He bent to kiss Danton as he passed him, but the executioners interposed.

"Fools," said Danton, with bitter and terrible mockery. "You cannot prevent our heads from meeting later in the basket."

Lacroix next ascended the scaffold, and then Camille was summoned.

At this last supreme moment, his self-control returned; he faced death steadily. He ascended the ladder with a firm step, his dark eyes fixed on the great statue, towering above him.

"So the first apostle of liberty falls . . ." he murmured.

Sanson approached to bind him to the plank, and Camille showed him the lock of Lucile's hair which was still clasped in his hand.

"Send this to her mother . . ." he said, and then, as they pushed him under the knife, with his last breath came the broken words: "Oh, my poor wife. . . ."

Last of them all died Danton. He also thought of his wife, and, at the thought, even his iron self-control gave way.

"My beloved, I shall never see thee again," he muttered, under his breath, and then, fighting back his grief: "Come, come, Danton, no weakness!" he said aloud.

Once again, and for the last time, that mighty voice rang out, over the heads of the awed and trembling crowd.

"Show my head to the people!" he commanded Sanson. "It is good to look at; they do not see the like every day."

"My poor wife. . . ." Lucile would not have echoed those words of Camille's. We have seen how one of these faithful lovers died, and the story is sad enough. Now, we must turn to watch the triumphant passing of Lucile Desmoulins.

Alexandre de Laflotte and Captain Amans, the sheep of the prisons, had filled in the outlines of an almost imaginary plot in the Luxembourg, until it grew well defined, and in the end became formidable enough to bring about the condemnation and death of the Dantonists.

But their work was not yet at an end.

On the 15th Germinal, the eve of Camille's death, the warrant was issued for Lucile's arrest. They did not leave the girl to mourn her husband even upon



the day of his execution ; she was carried to the prison of Saint-Pélagie, dragged from her parents and her little boy, the only living creatures who could have consoled her.

Yet we are told that Lucile went willingly and even gladly ; she seemed assured that it was only by this pathway that she could reach Camille's side once more.

Lucile was transferred to the Conciergerie on the 18th Germinal. She met there those who were to be her companions in death—Arthur Dillon, Gobel, the ex-bishop, Chaumette, the Grammonts, father and son, Hébert's widow—in all eighteen men and women. It was a strange fate which decreed that Lucile Desmoulins and the wife of Hébert should die together. All the bitter enmities of their husbands were forgotten now, and we read that the two women sat together for hours, on a stone in the courtyard, weeping for the men whom they so dearly loved.

On the 21st Germinal the prisoners were brought before the Tribunal. They were accused, said their judges, of having conspired against the safety of the people, and of having wished to destroy the National Convention, further, of being in the pay of the foreigner and of having aimed at replacing on the throne of France the son of Louis XVI.

All defence was useless, even if it had been permitted. As Chaumette truly said : “ You have decided upon my fate. I await my destiny with calmness.”

It was with more than calmness that Lucile heard that fate pronounced. She had remained perfectly serene all through the three days' trial, quietly denying the charges of treason brought against her, yet almost dreading acquittal, so it seemed to the onlookers. When the death sentence was passed upon herself and her companions, a strange, supernatural joy shone in her eyes.

“ What happiness ! ” she cried. “ In a few hours I shall see my Camille again ! ”

And then, so it was said, a spirit of prophecy seemed to come upon the girl, as she turned to her judges.

"In quitting this earth to which love no longer binds me," she said solemnly, "I am less to be pitied than you; for, at your death, which will be infamous, you will be haunted by remorse for what you have done."

Lucile's strange exaltation filled her until the end. Those who saw her were amazed at her joyful bearing. Hébert's widow said to her with bitter self-condemnation:

"You are lucky; nobody speaks ill of you: there is no stain on your character; you will leave life by the grand staircase."

When Lucile apologised sweetly to Arthur Dillon for having aided to bring about his death, the gallant Irishman laughed at her self-reproach. But when he tried to find words for his own sympathy, Lucile interrupted him.

"Look at my face," she said joyfully. "Is it that of a woman who needs to be comforted?"

She was dressed all in white, as though for a bridal, and with a white handkerchief passed over her head and tied under her chin. She seemed a very child, for she had cut off her soft, fair hair, and sent it to her mother with a little note of farewell.

"Good-night, dearest mother. A tear drops from my eyes; it is for you. I am going to sleep in peace and innocence. Lucile."

As they waited for the summons to death, the girl's courage never failed her.

"They have assassinated the best of men," she said. "If I did not hate them for that, I should bless them for the service they have done me this day."

She bowed to Dillon almost merrily as she ascended the tumbril; she talked sweetly and calmly to those who travelled with her along that gloomy road which led to death.

Dillon no longer tried to hide his real feelings at the end. "Long live the King!" he cried, as he stood upon the scaffold, and laughed at the outcry of the mob.

Of Lucile no last words are recorded. She had no thought of how her bearing would impress the bystanders, no thought at all beyond the ever-present consciousness that she was about to rejoin Camille. No faintest shadow of doubt dimmed that hope. She passed lightly up the steps of the guillotine, her "grand staircase," she lay down as directed upon the plank. Her colour had scarcely changed, and always she smiled—as one sees a child smile at some inward, joyful thought.

Very sure it is that death had lost its sting for Lucile Desmoulins. It is even hard for us to feel the tragedy of it all, since to her it was no such thing, but a very joyous journey which should end in "lovers' meetings."

The tragedy lies here as always with those who were left, those on whom such overwhelming sorrow and loss had descended.

In quiet, homely Guise a lonely old man mourned for all who were nearest and dearest to him, for his wife, "the half of himself," and for his eldest son, the brilliant, lovable son who had been his pride. The letter is still preserved in which M. Desmoulins pleaded with Fouquier for Camille's life, a letter as noble and dignified as was the man himself.

"Camille Desmoulins (my son)," he writes, "I speak from sincere conviction, is a true Republican, a Republican in feeling, in principles, and, so to speak, by instinct. . . . His perfect disinterestedness and love of truth have kept him on a level with the loftiest aspirations of the Revolution. . . .

"Citizen, I ask of you but one thing, in the name of justice and of our country—for the true Republican thinks of naught besides—to investigate, and to cause the examining jury to investigate the conduct of my son, and that of his



denouncer, whosoever he may be ; it will soon be known which is the true Republican. The confidence I have in my son's innocence makes me believe that this accusation will prove a fresh triumph, as well for the Republic as for him."

This letter is dated 15th Germinal ; it was, therefore, not received by Fouquier until after the death of Camille.

It was not for long that M. Desmoulins mourned his son ; a few months later he too was dead, literally of a broken heart. At about the same time M. Duplessis died also, for the guillotine had killed both Lucile and her father with one and the same blow.

And now two only were left of that happy little group—"our dear Daronne" and "the little Horace." From henceforth Madame Duplessis devoted her life to the child of Camille and Lucile. She toiled and schemed untiringly for his interests, and, in spite of dreary poverty and innumerable obstacles, she managed to give him a good education and to enrol him in his father's profession.

Nevertheless, Horace Desmoulins remains, as far as we are concerned, a colourless, shadowy figure. In 1817 he migrated to Hayti, where he married, and in that far-off tropical island he died, not long afterwards, when he was but thirty-three years old—Camille's age.

Madame Duplessis survived her grandson ; she lived far into the nineteenth century, a lonely, sorrowful woman. Few sought her out in those humble lodgings in the Rue Sorbonne, where she dwelt, as it were, in a land of shadows, in which Camille and Lucile, her husband, and little Horace, were as real as the living people about her.

And so we close our story ; for, after all, what more is there to say ? To some it may seem that this life of Camille's was indeed a vain shadow, and his death profitless—that only proves that they have misread, or we miswritten his history.

We have tried throughout to portray the man as he really was, hiding none of his faults, striving not to exaggerate his virtues. He must needs appear as weak, emotional, easily moved from one extreme to the other; as a modern writer says: "He was the prey of impulses, the sport of passions, a fascinating child."

Yet, with it all, and in spite of all, the better one learns to know Camille, the easier it is to forgive him; for he loved, and was loved much.

Moreover, his political ideals were high, although he pursued them along devious paths. The Republic of his dreams was a fair thing, a mistress for whom men might well live and die.

And to those who think that it was but a lost cause for which Camille gave his life, there can be no better answer than the words of a decree, passed by the Council of Five Hundred two years later—words which form also his most fitting epitaph.

"Considerant que Camille Desmoulins, aussi représentant du peuple, membre de la Convention Nationale, fut conduit à la mort pour s'être élevé contre les proscriptions, et avoir rappelé des sentiments d'humanité déjà trop longtemps oubliés; qu'il est instant de venir au secours de ces infortunés, qui ont des droits égaux à la reconnaissance nationale."





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## INDEX

### A

Abbaye, Prison of the, 84  
 Achilles, 115  
 "Actes des Apôtres," 135  
 Acton, Lord, "Lectures on the French Revolution," 196, 197, 319  
 Adam, L'Île, 183  
 Adolphus, J., "Biographical Memoirs," 161, 319  
 Agrarian Laws, 76, 78  
 Alger, J. G., "Glimpses of the French Revolution," 320  
     "Paris in 1789-1794," 320  
 Alison, Sir A., "History of Europe," 320  
 Amans, Captain, 302, 312  
 Amar, 299, 304, 305  
 "Ami du Peuple," 102, 110, 174, 175  
 "Anecdotes inédites de la fin du dix-huitième siècle," 294  
 Anthoine, F. P. N., 159  
 Antonelle, 220, 284  
 A. R., Madame, 43  
 Arcis-sur-Aube, 182, 226, 229, 269, 277  
 "Argus, The," 214  
 Arras, 38, 49  
 Arsenal, The, 68  
 "Assassinateurs, The," 118, 119  
 "August 4th, day of," 83, 84  
 "August 10th, day of," 185, 188 *seq.*, 265, 270, 297  
 Augustus, 238, 239, 240

Aulard, A., "Political History of the French Revolution," 28, 81, 170, 174, 201, 243, 319

### B

Bailly, J. S., 55, 158, 160, 161, 173, 178  
 Barbaroux, C. J. M., 169, 184, 185, 212  
 Barère, Bertrand, 219, 250, 320  
 Barnave, A. P. J. M., 103, 137, 143, 148, 151, 168, 235, 273, 274  
 Barras, Marquis de, 320  
 Bastille, The, 68 *seq.*, 97, 107, 113, 114, 115, 123, 184  
 Bax, E. Belfort, "Marat, the People's Friend," 320  
 Bazire, 293, 296  
 Beaubourg, 62  
 Beauharnais, Alexandre, 149  
 Beesley, A. H., "Danton," 319  
 Beffroi, 171  
 Belesme, 98  
 Belloc, H., "The French Revolution," 196, 319  
     "Danton," 196, 319  
     "Robespierre," 319  
     "Paris," 320  
 Bérardier, Abbé, 24, 125, 127, 128  
 Bergasse, N., 116  
 Bernard, 161, 163  
 Bernese Oberland, The, 64  
 Berthier, 84



- Besenval, Pierre Victor B. de, 71, 72  
 Billaud-Varennes, J. N., 215, 231, 250, 296, 299, 303  
 Birch, Una, "Secret Societies of the French Revolution," 45, 46, 319  
 Blanc, Louis, "The French Revolution," 242, 319  
 Boilly, L. L., 122  
 Bois de Boulogne, 119  
 Boissuguyon, G., 173  
 Bonnemère, Aubin, 72  
 Bonneville, 146  
 Boucher Saint-Sauveur, 158  
 Bouchotte, 251, 253  
 Bouillé, F. C. A., Marquis de, 144  
 Bourdon de l'Oise, 257  
 "Bourgeois Monarchy, The," 170, 175  
 Bourg-la-Reine, 38, 112, 130, 183, 186, 188, 264  
 Bourville, Abbé de, 51  
 Boverie, 64  
 Brabant, 100  
 Bravet, 294  
 Bréard, 213  
 Brest, 185, 192  
 Brézé, Marquis de, 55, 56  
 Brink, Jan ten, "Robespierre and the Red Terror," 319  
 "Brissot Démasqué," 87, 172, 177, 206, 220, 233  
 Brissot, J. P., 46, 98, 127 *seq.*, 139, 159, 169 *seq.*, 202, 206 *seq.*, 216, 219, 234, 259  
 "Brissotins, The," 169  
 Brittany, 52  
 Brune, Marshal (Patagon), 131, 159, 262, 263  
 Brunswick, Duke of, 176, 183  
 Brutus, 81, 132, 235, 239, 240, 246, 252, 286  
 Burke, Edmund, "Reflections on the Revolution in France," 320  
 Buzot, 169, 212  
 Byron, Lord, 92
- C
- "Cabran d'Or," 185  
 Cahiers, The, 47, 48, 68  
 Cain, Georges, "Walks in Paris," 23, 24, 320  
 Caligula, 165  
 Calvados, 185  
 Calvin, 20  
 Cambon, 233  
 Camus, A. G., 118  
 Carlyle, Thomas, "French Revolution," 103, 133, 140, 319  
 Carmelite Convent, Prison of, 268  
 Carnot, L. N. M., 219  
 Carrier, J. B., 269  
 Carrousel, Place de, 203  
 Cateau-Cambresis, 22  
 Cato, 240  
 Chabot, François, 290, 293, 296, 304  
 Champ-de-Mars, 56, 65, 71, 113, 114, 123, 158, 184  
 Champ-de-Mars, Massacre of, 160, 163, 165, 233  
 Champs Elysées, 65, 114, 166  
 Charenton, 185  
 Charles I, 201  
 Charpentier, 319  
 Charpentier, Gabrielle (*see* Madame Danton)  
 Charpentier, Madame, 188  
 Chateaubriand, F. A., 52, 132  
 Châtelet, The, 93, 116, 117  
 Chaumette, Anaxagoras, 229, 231, 233, 241, 284, 313  
 Chauveau-de-Lagarde, 288, 300  
 Chénier, Marie-Joseph, 219  
 Choderlos de Laclos, 158, 159  
 "Chronicle de Paris," 94  
 Cicero, 27, 76, 80, 101, 252

Claretie, Jules, "Camille Desmoulins and his Wife," 19, 32, 40, 64, 104, 110, 122, 123, 163, 225, 262, 286, 319  
 Clavière, 194  
 "Clemency, Committee of," 131, 227, 243 *seq.*, 265, 266  
 Clootz, Anarcharsis, 231 *seq.*, 269  
 Clos-Payen, 130  
 Coalition, The, 177, 183, 207  
 Coblenz, 180  
 Cobourg, 284  
 Collot d'Herbois, 248, 255 *seq.*, 268, 276  
 Combès, Louis, 76  
 Commerce, Cour de, 190  
 Commission of Execution (*see* Committee of Public Safety)  
 Conciergerie, The, 74, 273, 285, 290, 291, 306, 307, 308, 313  
 Condé, Prince de, 32  
 Condé, Rue de, 127, 133  
 Condorcet, J. A. N. de Caritat, 20  
 Constitution, Committee of, 147  
 Constitution, The, 80, 111, 165, 170, 176, 180, 202, 241, 245  
 "Contrat Social," The, 244  
 Corday, Charlotte, 212  
 Cordeliers, Church of the, 126, 189  
 Cordeliers Club, 107, 115, 158, 178, 228, 229, 249, 262, 269  
 Correctional Police Court, 171  
 "Courier de Provence," 97  
 Couthon, Georges, 213, 231  
 Crillon, 116  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 137, 173  
 Curtius, 64  
 Cyneas, 80

## D

Danican, General, 67  
 Danton, Georges-Jacques, 38, 46, 89, 107, 110, 115

Friendship with Camille, 133, 134, 140, 144, 146, 148, 159, 161, 169, 178, 182, 185  
 Organises the rising of August 10th, 188 *seq.*  
 Raises troops against the Coalition, 206 *seq.*  
 Retires to Arcis-sur-Aube, 219, 226, 227  
 Returns to Paris, 229, 230  
 Loses his influence, 247, 251  
 Endeavours to make peace between Camille and Robespierre, 260  
 Indifferent to danger, 275  
 Arrested and conveyed to the Luxembourg, 277 *seq.*  
 Hears his accusation, 290  
 Removed to Conciergerie, 291  
 Trial of Dantonists, 293 *seq.*  
 Sentenced to death, 307  
 Execution of the Dantonists, 308 *seq.*  
 Danton, Madame, 188, 190  
 Dauphine, Place, 297  
 Dauphiny, 52  
 Déforgues, 263  
 Delaunay, 293, 296  
 Demosthenes, 289  
 Denisard, M., 36  
 Desboisseaux, 294  
 Desenne (Desein), 53, 244, 250, 272  
 Desmoulins, Lucie - Simplicie - Camille-Benoist :  
 Birth of, 19  
 Statues and portraits of, 20, 43, 64  
 Character of, 23, 25, 39, 40, 109, 317  
 Personal characteristics of, 35, 36, 43, 44, 131  
 As a journalist, 82, 87, 88, 102 *seq.*, 138  
 Education at the College Louis-le-Grand, 23 *seq.*

Returns to Guise, 30  
 Becomes Advocate to the Parliament of Paris, 34  
 His poverty, 36  
 Introduction to the Duplessis family, 37  
 As a Freemason, 45  
 Attempts to obtain election to the States-General, 48 *seq.*  
 First published pamphlets of, 49, 50, 54  
 Hears news of Necker's dismissal and harangues crowd in the Palais Royal, 58 *seq.*  
 Incites the Parisians to attack the Bastille, 70  
 Sudden popularity of, 75 *seq.*  
 Publication of "La France Libre," 76 *seq.*  
 Publication of "Discours de la Lanterne," 82 *seq.*  
 Financial difficulties of, 95, 96  
 His friendship with Mirabeau, 97, 98  
 Edits "Révolutions de France et de Brabant," 100 *seq.*  
 Suitor of Lucile Duplessis, 106  
 Joins the Club of the Cordeliers, 107  
 Quarrels with Mirabeau, 108  
 Denounced to National Assembly by Victor Malouet, 116  
 Betrothal and Marriage, 124 *seq.*  
 Friendship with Danton, 133  
 Relations with Mirabeau, 138 *seq.*  
 Implicated in affair of the Champ-de-Mars, 159 *seq.*  
 Ceases publication of "Révolutions de France et de Brabant," 162  
 Quarrels with Brissot, 170 *seq.*  
 Edits "Tribune des Patriotes," 172

Birth of Horace-Camille Desmoulins, 181  
 Implication in the affair of August 10th, 187 *seq.*  
 Elected Deputy to the Convention, 199  
 Publishes "Histoire des Brissotins," 209  
 Defends Arthur Dillon, 213  
 Reaction of feeling of, 220 *seq.*  
 Publishes "Vieux Cordelier," 226 *seq.*  
 Accused at the Jacobins Club, 233 *seq.*, 247  
 Defends Philippeaux, 236, 237  
 Expelled from Cordeliers Club, 249  
 Denounced by Collot d'Herbois, 255  
 Denounces the "ultras," 268 *seq.*  
 Arrest of, 279  
 Letters to his wife from the Luxembourg, 281 *seq.*  
 Brought before Revolutionary Tribunal, 293 *seq.*  
 Condemned to death, 306  
 Execution of, 312  
 Desmoulins, Anne - Lucile - Philippe-Laridon:  
 First meets Camille, 37 *seq.*  
 Character of, 41 *seq.*, 122, 218  
 Diary of, 42  
 Personal appearance of, 121, 122, 130  
 Her love for Camille, 106, 123, 124, 219  
 Royalist libels against, 134, 135  
 Account of August 10th, 187 *seq.*  
 Letter to Fréron, 266, 267  
 Grief at Camille's arrest, 280 *seq.*  
 Arrest of, 312  
 Trial and condemnation, 313  
 Execution of, 314, 315



Desmoulins, Jean-Benoît-Nicholas :

His character and position, 19, 20, 21

Nominated for States-General, 49

Relations with Camille, 94, 125

Warns Camille against voting for death of Louis XVI, 205

Writes to Fouquier-Tinville, 315

Death of, 316

Desmoulins, Marie-Magdeleine Godart :

Her character, 21

Death of, 278

Desmoulins, Armand-Jean-Louis-Domitille du Bucquoy, 21, 22

Desmoulins, Lazare-Nicolas-Norbert-Félicité Semery, 21, 22, 217

Desmoulins, Marie-Émilie-Toussaint, 22

Desmoulins, Anne-Clotilde-Pélagie, 22

Desmoulins, Horace-Camille, 181, 182, 187, 271, 278, 280 *seq.*, 316

Despagnac, 293

Despois, Eugène, 120

Dessessarts, D., 119

"Dictionnaire Universel de la France," 47

Diedrichsen, 293

Dillon, Arthur, 43, 213, 214, 215, 234, 235, 300, 302, 304, 313, 314, 315

"Dillon, Lettre au Général," 215 *seq.*, 234

Diogenes, 83

Directory, The, 208

Dithurbide, 171

Drouet, J. B., 150

Drusus, 232

Du Barry, Madame, 113

Ducancel, 159

Ducray, 307

Dumouriez, C. F., 177, 207, 298, 300

Dunkirk, 102

Dunoyer, A., "Public Prosecutor of the Terror," 320

Duplain (Saturn), 131

Duplay, 311

Duplessis, Monsieur, 37, 41, 106, 122 *seq.*, 128, 268, 316

Duplessis, Madame, 37, 41, 106, 123 *seq.*, 128, 130, 131, 187, 316

Duplessis, Adèle (Annette), 37, 128

Duport, 138, 168

## E

Echérolles, Mademoiselle des, 320

Ecoles, Café des, 188

Electoral Committee of Paris, 69, 70

Elie, Captain, 72

Elizabeth of France, 128

"Emigrés," 136, 137, 176

Encyclopædists, The, 45

"Enragés" (*see* "Ultras")

Essarts, Emmanuel des, 110

## F

Fabre d'Eglantine, P. F. N., 107, 256, 257, 266, 283, 290, 293, 309, 310

Fauchet, Abbé, 46, 185

Favras, Marquis de, 108, 264

Fénelon, Archbishop, "Maxims of the Saints," 250

Ferroux, 284

"Festival of the Federation," 113

Feuillants, Club of, 251

Feuillants, Terrace of, 179

Five Hundred, Council of the, 219, 317

Flesselles, de, 73

Fleuriot-Lescot, 294  
 Fleury, Edouard, 32, 319  
 Florence, 302  
 Fontenay-sous-Bois, 161  
 Forget, 36  
 Foucault, 294  
 Foulon, J. F., 83, 84  
 Fouquier-Tinville, A. Q., 196,  
 214, 292, 293, 294, 296, 299,  
 300 *seq.*, 315, 316  
 Foy, Café, 63  
 "France Libre, La," 53, 75 *seq.*,  
 94, 173, 261  
 Franklin, Benjamin, 28  
 Freemasonry in France, 45, 46  
 French Revolution, Causes of, 44,  
 45, 46  
 First bloodshed in, 65  
 Proclamation of Republic, 199  
 Fréron, Stanislas (Lapin), 24, 37,  
 111, 112, 131, 162, 172, 174,  
 175, 189, 264, 265, 266, 267  
 Frey, 293, 296, 301  
 Friends of the Constitution,  
 Society of, 165  
 Fusius Geminus, 239

## G

Garde-Meuble, 67  
 Garney, 101  
 Garran de Coulon, 146  
 "Gavroche," 104  
 "Gazette Universel," 233  
 General Defence, Committee of  
 (*see* Committee of Public  
 Safety)  
 General Security, Committee of,  
 248, 276, 299, 305, 306  
 Gensonné, Armand, 210  
 Gibbs, Philip, "Men and Women  
 of the French Revolution,"  
 174, 198, 220, 319  
 Girey-Dupré, 171  
 Girondins, the, 87, 169, 201, 209,  
 210, 219, 220, 234, 290

Gobel, Bishop, 313  
 Gobelins Section, 147  
 Godart, Marie-Joseph-Benoît, 22  
 Godart, Rose-Flore-Amélie, 33,  
 34, 216  
 Godart-Brisieux, 22  
 Godart-Brisieux, Madame, 32  
 Gracchi, 232  
 Grammont, 313  
 Grève, Place de, 83  
 Grossé-Beaurepaire, 285  
 Guadet, M. E., 143, 169, 210, 233  
 Gueudeville, Abbé, 128  
 Guise, 19, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37, 49,  
 93, 94, 181, 195, 199, 216,  
 314  
 Guzman, 293, 301

## H

Hamel, Frank, 192  
 Hampden, John, 28  
 Harlay, Cour de, 297  
 Harpe, Rue de la, 75  
 Hayti, 316  
 Hébert, J. R., 88, 102, 228, 248,  
 251 *seq.*, 262, 265, 268 *seq.*  
 Hébert, Madame, 313, 314  
 Hébertists (*see* "Ultras")  
 Hérault de Séchelles, M. J., 275,  
 284, 290, 292, 293, 295, 300,  
 309 *seq.*  
 Hermann, A. M. J., 294, 295, 296,  
 298, 299, 300, 305, 307  
 Hervey, John, "Meditations  
 among the Tombs," 280  
 Hesdin, Raoul, "Journal of a  
 Spy in Paris, 1794," 320  
 "Histoire des Brissotins" ("Frag-  
 ment de l'Histoire Secrète de  
 la Révolution"), 27, 198,  
 209, 210, 211  
 Homer, 115  
 Hosea, 156  
 Hulin, 72

## I

- "Indulgents," party of, 275, 277, 289, 293  
 "Insurrection du 31 mai, Adresse des Jacobins aux," 212  
 Invalides, Les, 69, 70, 71  
 Isnard, Max., 169

## J

- Jacobin Club, 89, 103, 107, 120, 138, 148, 150, 158, 159, 161, 165, 173, 178, 180, 200, 209, 211, 215, 228 *seq.*, 241, 255, 262, 276  
 Jacobins, Church of the, 159  
 Job, 224  
 "Journal de la Cour et de la Ville," 135  
 "Journal des Etats-Généraux," 97  
 "Journal Français," 200  
 Journalism, 53, 100, 103, 105, 134  
 "July 14th, day of," 70, 72  
 "June 20th, day of," 178, 179  
 Justice, Committee of, 243  
 Justice, Palais de, 293, 297, 302, 304, 306

## K

- Kersaint, G. P. de C., 198  
 Kropotkin, P. A., "The Great French Revolution," 319

## L

- Lacroix, J. F. de, 281, 290, 293, 300, 304, 305, 310, 311  
 La Fayette, M. P. R. Y. G. M., Marquis de, 28, 144, 147 *seq.*, 153, 160 *seq.*, 173, 180, 230  
 Laffrey, 111  
 Lafflotte, Alexandre de, 302, 312  
 Lagrange, 22

- Lamartine, A. de, "Histoire des Girondins," 319  
 Lambesc, Prince de, 65, 66  
 Lameth, Charles de, 103, 137, 138, 158, 168, 173, 235  
 Lameth, Alexandre de, 118, 168  
 Lamoignon, C. F., 195  
 Lanthenas, 159  
 Laon, 48, 127, 199  
 La Poype, 159  
 La Rochefoucauld, 46  
 La Rochejacquelein, Henri du V., 233  
 Latour-Maubeuge, M. C. C. F., 151  
 Laudréville, Abbé, 283  
 Launay, R. B. J. de, 69 *seq.*  
 Lebrun, C. F., 194  
 Lecointre, Laurent, 182  
 Legendre, Louis, 161, 216, 276, 288, 289  
 Legislation, Committee of, 277  
 Legislative Assembly, 145, 146, 147, 164, 168, 199, 201, 233  
 Lemoine, 22  
 Lenotre, G., "Flight of Marie Antoinette," 147, 319  
 "Tribunal of the Terror," 196, 320  
 "Vielles Maisons, Vieux Papiers," 104, 127, 130, 262, 320  
 Leroy (Dix-Août), 294  
 Lescure, L. M., Marquis de, 233  
 "Lettres de Cachet," 80  
 "Lettres de Mirabeau à ses Commettants," 97  
 Lewes, G. H., "Maximilien Robespierre," 320  
 Lhuillier, 293, 306  
 Liberté, Salle de, 293  
 Liberty, Statue of, 311  
 Lindet, Robert, 277  
 Lorme, de, 72  
 Louis-Quinze, Place, 74  
 Louis XIV, 80



Louis XV, 80  
 Louis XVI, 47, 56, 73, 81, 88, 99,  
 111, 114, 116, 136, 143 *seq.*,  
 152, 158, 165, 170, 176 *seq.*,  
 194, 200 *seq.*  
 "Louis XVI, Opinion upon the  
 Judgment of," 202  
 Louis XVII, 206, 303, 313  
 Louis-le-Grand, College of, 23,  
 24, 274  
 Loustalot, Elysée, 119, 120, 123  
 Louvet de Couvray, J. B., 169,  
 212  
 Lucas, E. V., "A Wanderer in  
 Paris," 320  
 Lumière, 294  
 Lunettes, Quai de, 226  
 Luxembourg, Gardens of, 38,  
 106, 270, 271, 281  
 Luxembourg, Palace of, 189, 266,  
 281, 286, 288, 302 *seq.*, 312  
 Lyons, 248, 255

## M

McCarthy, J. H., "The French  
 Revolution," 87, 138, 319  
 Machiavelli, N. di B. dei, 229  
 Madelonnettes, Prison of the,  
 213, 214  
 Malouet, Victor, 115 *seq.*, 129  
 Mandar, Théophile, 158  
 Manuel, P. L., 205  
 Marat, Jean-Paul, 102, 110, 112,  
 115, 118, 174, 175, 197, 198,  
 209, 212, 247, 298, 300  
 Marcandier, Roch, "Hommes  
 des Proies," 162, 163, 320  
 Marck, de la, 140  
 Marie-Antoinette, 52, 56, 99,  
 136, 143, 144, 150, 151, 165,  
 170, 177, 193, 213, 218, 219  
 Mark Antony, 77, 272  
 Marseillais Federals, 184, 185, 188,  
 190 *seq.*

"Marseillaise, The," 185  
 Marseilles, 102, 112, 139, 162  
 Masson-Denizot, 294  
 Massulard, 158  
 Matton, 286, 319  
 Maupeou, R. N. A. de, 195  
 "May 31st, day of," 209, 211  
 Mercier, L. S., "Nouveau  
 Tableau de Paris," 89  
 "Tableaux de Paris," 95, 127  
*seq.*  
 "Mercure Français," 162  
 Méricourt, Théroigne de, 107,  
 108, 192, 193  
 Merlin, Antoine (de Thionville),  
 182, 200  
 Michelet, J., "Historical View of  
 the French Revolution," 134,  
 243, 271, 272, 319  
 Mignet, J. H., "The French  
 Revolution," 319  
 Mint, The, 297  
 Miot de Melito, "Memoirs,"  
 263, 320  
 Mirabeau, Gabriel-Honoré de  
 Riquetti, 46, 51, 55, 80, 85,  
 94  
 Friendship with Camille, 96  
*seq.*  
 Coldness between them, 108  
*seq.*  
 Influence over Camille, 134  
 Last days and death, 137 *seq.*  
 Mirabeau-Tonneau, 103, 118  
 Modena, 239  
 Moleville, Bertrand de, 63  
 Momoro, 54, 75, 80, 261, 269  
 Monge, G., 194  
 "Moniteur, The," 49, 254  
 Monk, General, 177  
 Monseignat, Charles de, "His-  
 toire des Journaux de  
 France," 101, 104, 319  
 Monselet, Charles, "Histoire  
 Anecdotique du Tribunal  
 Révolutionnaire," 320

Moore, Dr., "Memoirs," 319  
 Morcy, 22  
 Moreau de Jonnés, 122  
 "Mountain, The," 201, 209, 273

## N

Nancy, 120, 165  
 Nantes, 269  
 Nantouillet, 248  
 National (Constituent) Assembly,  
   56, 73, 80, 81, 99, 111, 116,  
   166, 168  
 National Convention, 168, 198,  
   199, 201, 203, 205, 210, 211,  
   236, 243, 269, 272, 289, 304  
 National Guard, 68, 118, 153, 162  
 National Oath, 111  
 Necker, Jacques, 51, 58, 60, 61,  
   64, 97, 103  
 Nero, 165, 202  
 Neuf Sœurs, Lodge of the, 45  
 Nicolas, 247 *seq.*  
 Nivernais, Hôtel de, 95  
 Normandy, 212  
 "Notes upon the Report of  
   Saint-Just," 291  
 Notre Dame, Cathedral of, 166  
 Nursia, 239

## O

Octavius, 272  
 "October 5th, day of," 99, 100  
 "Ode upon the opening of the  
   States-General," 50  
 "Orateur du Peuple," 112  
 Orleans, Duke of, 51, 52, 55, 64,  
   158, 204, 298, 300  
 Orleans, Regent of, 80  
 Otriades, 81

## P

Palais Royal, 53, 55, 57, 59, 64,  
   85, 115, 159, 310  
 Pancemont, de, 126

Panis, 277  
 Paris, temper of, in July, 1789,  
   56, 59, 66, 67  
 Optimism in, 1790, 111  
 Mourning for Mirabeau in,  
   140, 141  
 Attitude after return from  
   Varennes in, 151  
 Counter-revolutionary move-  
   ment in, 157, 165 *seq.*  
 Counter-revolutionary move-  
   ment after execution of  
   "ultras," 276  
 Citizens of, demoralised by  
   executions, 246  
 Municipality of, 73, 160, 163,  
   178, 185, 194, 211, 241  
 Pâris, Nicolas-Joseph (Fabricius),  
   293, 294, 296, 305, 306  
 Pas Perdue, Cour de, 297  
 "Patriote Français," 129, 171  
 Patrocles, 115  
 Paulus Emilius, 74, 116  
 Peltier, J. S., 24, 135  
 Perdry, 36  
 "Père Duchesne," 88, 102, 228,  
   229, 249 *seq.*, 268, 269  
 Perfectibilists, Order of, 45  
 Perrin, 36  
 Perry, Sampson, 214  
 "Peter Pan," 109  
 Pétion, Jérôme, 46, 118, 127,  
   128, 151, 158, 178, 180, 184,  
   210, 212  
 Petitions against Property Suf-  
   frage Laws, 146, 168  
   In the Champ-de-Mars, 158,  
   159, 160, 202  
 Philippe le Bel, 79  
 Philippeaux, 236, 251, 255 *seq.*,  
   281, 290, 293, 296, 309, 310  
 "Philosophe au Peuple Français,  
   La," 49  
 Picards, character of, 20  
 Pitt, William, 229, 240, 251, 284  
 Plato, 212

Pologne, Hôtel de, 37, 42  
 Pont Neuf, 162, 297  
 Procope, Café (Café Voltaire), 37  
 Proly, 233, 300  
 Provence, Count of, 206  
 Provisional Executive Council,  
   194, 199  
 Prudhomme, Louis-Marie, 162  
 Public Safety, Committee of,  
   208, 216, 227, 238, 247, 250,  
   254, 262, 269, 275, 276, 294,  
   296, 301, 302  
 "Purification," ceremony of,  
   233, 234  
 Pym, John, 28

## R

Radziville, Passage, 171  
 Raimond, 210  
 Reason, Cult of, 231  
 "Réflexions sur le 20 Juin,  
   1792," 180  
 "Register of Occurrences and  
   Historical Sketch," 214  
 Rénaudin, Leopold, 294  
 Republicanism in France, 28, 81,  
   149, 152, 159, 160, 170, 173,  
   174, 273  
 Rétif de la Bretonne, 135  
 Réunion-sur-Oise, 31  
 Révolution, Place de la, 74, 246,  
   311  
 Revolutionary Tribunal, the, 88,  
   208, 209, 210, 234, 248, 264,  
   287, 289, 293, 313  
 "Révolutions de France et de  
   Brabant," 100 *seq.*, 111, 117,  
   119, 145, 162, 170, 174, 175,  
   200, 264  
 "Révolutions de Paris," 120, 162  
 Robert, 160, 189, 190, 191, 266  
 Robert, Madame, 189, 266  
 Robespierre, J. M. I. de, 38, 43,  
   46, 48, 51, 94, 109, 110  
   Defends Camille in the As-  
   sembly, 117

Attends Camille's wedding,  
   127 *seq.*, 134, 150, 158, 168,  
   173 *seq.*, 185, 186, 188, 209  
 Inspires "Histoire des Bris-  
   sotins," 210 *seq.*  
 Influences first numbers of  
   "Vieux Cordelier," 227 *seq.*  
 Defends Camille at the Jaco-  
   bins, 235, 236  
 Deserts Camille, 243, 249, 255,  
   257  
 Denounces Camille at the  
   Jacobins, 259 *seq.*  
 Attacks the "ultras," 269  
 Signs warrant for the arrest of  
   the Dantonists, 276, 277,  
   286, 288, 289, 291, 298, 311  
 Robespierre, Augustin B. J. de,  
   25, 256, 257  
 Robespierre, Charlotte de, 25,  
   286, 287  
 Robinet, H., "Procès des Dan-  
   tonistes," 277, 320  
   "Comment se tuent les Ré-  
   publiques," 277, 320  
 Roland de la Platière, J. M., 177,  
   179, 194, 199  
 Roland, Madame Marie, J. P.,  
   169, 171, 319  
 "Rolandists, The," 169  
 Romeuf, 150  
 Romme, Gilbert, 46  
 Ronsin, 236, 269  
 Rossignol, 236  
 Rouillard, 43  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 42, 45,  
   131, 244, 260  
 Royal Allemand, Regiment of  
   the, 65  
 Ruhl, 277

## S

Sainte-Amaranthe, the family of,  
   43, 122, 320  
 Saint-André-des-Arcs, Rue de, 37



Saint-Antoine, Faubourg, 68, 69,  
70, 185  
Sainte-Beuve, Charles A., 43  
Saint-Cloud, Palace of, 144  
Saint-Denis, cathedral of, 203  
Saint-François, Rue, 54  
Saint-Honoré, Rue, 74, 274, 309,  
311  
Saint-Huruge, Marquis de, 93, 94  
Saint-Jean d'Angely, 120  
St. John, Gospel of, 83  
Saint-Just, A. L. L. de, 25, 113,  
215, 216, 231, 249, 269, 270  
Denounces the Dantonists, 277  
Report against them, 289 *seq.*,  
296, 300, 301  
Secures their condemnation,  
303 *seq.*  
Saint-Malo, 175  
Saint-Marceau, Faubourg de, 68,  
69, 70, 185  
Sainte-Menehould, 150  
Sainte-Pélagie, Prison of, 313  
Saint-Pierre, J. H. Bernardin de,  
131  
Saint-Pierre and Saint-Paul,  
Church of, 19  
Saint-Simon, L. H. duc de, 20  
Saint-Sulpice, Church of, 126,  
128  
Salle d'Offrémont, de la, 68  
Sallust, 212  
"Sansculotte Jésus," 88, 89, 269,  
295  
Sanson, Henri, 105, 308, 311, 312,  
320  
Santerre, Antoine J., 69, 161, 163,  
185  
Saugrain, C. M., "Nouveau  
Voyage de France," 20, 320  
Saumur, 236  
Scipio Nasica, 232  
Seneca, 200, 212  
September Massacres, the, 187,  
196  
Sergent, Antoine F., 159

Servan de Gerbey, J., 194  
Shakespeare, William, 77  
Sidney, Algernon, 29, 173, 253  
Siéyès, Emmanuel Joseph, 168  
Sillery, C. A., Comte de Genlis,  
127, 128  
"Silver Mark" property qualifi-  
cation, 146  
Simon, 284  
Smyth, William, "Lectures on  
the French Revolution," 319  
Socrates, 284  
Soissons, 199  
Sombreuil, C. F. Virot, Marquis  
de, 70  
Sorbonne, Rue, 316  
Sosia, 83  
Souberbielle, 294  
Sourd, La, 192  
"Souvenirs de la Terreur," 43  
Sparta, 81  
States-General, Convocation of  
the, 47  
Opening of the, 50  
Becomes "National Assembly,"  
55, 56  
Mirabeau's estimate of, 99  
Strasburg, 295  
Suleau, L. F., 24, 190, 192, 193  
"Suspects," Law of, 238, 241  
Swiss Guards, 120, 191, 192  
Swiss Restaurant, 119  
Sybel, Heinrich von, "French  
Revolution," 63, 104, 249,  
319

## T

Tacitus, 26, 238, 240, 246, 250  
Taine, H., "Les Jacobins," 319  
Talon, Antoine, 116  
Target, G. J. B., 73, 74, 94  
Tarquin, 80, 286  
Tarrieux de Taillan, 33  
Tellier, de, 84  
"Temple of the National As-  
sembly, the," 107

Temple, Tower of the, 194  
 "Tennis Court Oath, The," 54,  
   55, 179  
 Terray, Abbé, 135  
 "Terror, The," 169, 219, 228  
 Théâtre Français, Rue de, 36,  
   107, 128, 133  
 Théâtre Français, Section of, 146,  
   164  
 Thiers, L. A., "Histoire de la  
   Révolution Française," 177,  
   320  
 Topino-Lebrun, F. J. B., 295, 299,  
   300  
 Toulon, 112, 131, 132, 264, 265,  
   266  
 Tournay, Louis, 72  
 "Tribune des Patriots, Le," 172,  
   173, 174, 177  
 Tricolour, the, 68  
 Trinchart, 294  
 Tuileries, Gardens of, 66, 149  
 Tuileries, Palace of, 99, 149, 151,  
   179, 189, 193, 194, 302  
 Tussaud, Madame, 65

## U

"Ultras, The," 84, 228 *seq.*, 238,  
   245, 247, 249, 250, 269, 276,  
   300

## V

Vadier, M. G. A., 299  
 Valazé, C. E. du F. de, 169  
 Valerius Maximus, 268  
 Vannerie, Rue de la, 83  
 Varennes, 136, 144, 147, 150, 202  
 Vendée, La, 207, 217, 236, 237,  
   257  
 Vendôme, Place, 158  
 Vergniaud, Pierre V., 169, 205,  
   212, 233

Vermandois, Electors of, 49, 76  
 Vernon, Battle of, 212  
 Versailles, 51, 56, 58, 98, 99, 117  
 Vertot, R. A., "Révolutions  
   Romaines," 27  
 "Vervins, Journal de," 21  
 "Veto, The," 175, 179  
 Vieffville des Essarts, de, 23, 49,  
   196  
 "Vieux Cordelier," 60, 88, 134,  
   226 *seq.*, 237, 242 *seq.*, 258  
   *seq.*, 268 *seq.*, 279, 286, 287,  
   300  
 Vilate, "Memoirs," 220  
 Ville, Hôtel de, 68, 69, 70, 72, 74,  
   182, 190, 207  
 Vincennes, Fortress of, 68  
 Voltaire, F. M. Arouet de, 45,  
   231  
 Vouland, 299, 304, 305

## W

Washington, George, 28, 173  
 Wattignies, Battle of, 219  
 Weishaupt, the Illuminate, 45  
 Westermann, General F. J., 292,  
   293, 295, 300, 304, 309  
 Whittier, J. G., 18  
 Wiège, 32  
 Williams, Helen Maria, 62, 209,  
   319  
 Wimpfen, General, 212  
 Witt, Jean de, 253

## Y

Young, Arthur, "Travels in  
   France," 53, 319  
 Young, Edward, "Night  
   Thoughts," 280

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